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Current Demographic Analysis







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# Marriage and Conjugal Life in Canada

*Current Demographic Analysis*



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# Marriage and Conjugal Life in Canada

*Current Demographic Analysis*

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## Preface

At this time in our history, marriage resembles less and less the inevitable, ceremonial tying of the knot which, not so long ago, preceded the formation of new families, creating bonds between existing ones and strengthening the fabric of our society. The rise of divorce and common-law relationships over the past 20 years makes it appear, that the institution of marriage, having held firm for centuries, is being shaken to its foundations.

Studies on this important subject rarely deal with the demographic undercurrents behind the sudden and accelerating transformations. This short history of the evolution of marriage in Canada – the analysis of interrelated trends over time based on census data, vital statistics, and other survey data of our agency – will assist policy makers at all levels to evaluate these changes.

Ivan P. Fellegi  
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## **Highlights**

In the eighteenth century men married late (at age 27 on average) and their spouses were much younger, by 5 to 8 years.

xxx

Because of a short life expectancy, the average life span of a couple seldom exceeded 20 years. As the birth rate was very high, less than 20% of parental couples survived until the marriage of their youngest child.

xxx

At the end of the last century, the mean age at marriage in Canada was relatively high and a fairly large population did not even marry. For the generations that reached the age of 20 at the close of the Second World War, marriage was early and almost universal. Today we have returned to late and non-universal marriage.

xxx

Until the late 1960's in Canada divorce was rare. Today, Canada is among those countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Denmark and Sweden, where it is frequent.

xxx

Almost a quarter of the women who married in the 1960's were divorced before the twentieth anniversary of their marriage.

xxx

Today, for one marriage in three, one of the partners was marrying again.

xxx

The common-law union has long existed but in rather small numbers. Nowadays, this form of conjugal life is common and it is spreading very swiftly. Each new generation is showing a greater interest in this lifestyle than the one before.

xxx

The proportion of women who married before age 25 without having first lived in a common-law union fell from 75% for those who were born between 1936 and 1945, to 30% for those born at the beginning of the 1960's. For men, it dropped from 54% to 22%. For the same cohorts, direct marriages plummeted from 32% to 4% for women, and from 8% to 1% for men. Marriage appears to be on the verge of disappearing from the early conjugal life.

xxx

Lower rates of mortality, higher rates of divorce, an older age at first marriage, and remarriage, have reduced the average duration of marriage to a greater extent than the total time spent as married.

Younger cohorts engage in conjugal life later and later, whether they form a common-law union or a marriage.

xxx

The tendency to marry within the same ethnic group is particularly strong among new immigrants. The great majority of Japanese, Indians and Pakistanis, among others, marry in Canada people born in their homeland.

xxx

Before the War, marriages were less confined to the summer months than today. At the same time, they were more evenly spread throughout the week. Now, 72% of all marriages take place on Saturday.

xxx

As it marks the beginning of a family, marriage, and the age at which couples marry, have been sensitive to economic and political conditions. During the Great Depression, marriages were few, although the cohorts which lived through those difficult years have demonstrated that they married almost as much as the others.

## Introduction

Did people marry younger in the past? Historically, when was marriage the most common? When did divorce become routine? How many years does the average marriage last? Have common-law relationships replaced marriage? These are some of the questions that led to this study. To answer them we must first define what we mean by marriage.

In general terms, marriage is a union based on a legal relationship between a man and a woman, and it must, for this reason, be initiated, evolve, and be terminated within the framework of law or custom. Often “marriage” refers only to the civil or religious celebration of a union, a solemn act which confirms its genuineness. The term, however, is attributed to the union throughout its entire duration, while civil or Western laws legislate its course and determine the conditions of an eventual break-up. On the other hand, common-law unions (also called consensual relationships or cohabitation) commence without formalities, have few or no legal effects, and may be dissolved without forewarning or a legal ruling.

In Canada, as in other Western countries, marriage is monogamous – a person may have only one legal partner at a time. To prevent polygamy and other illicit unions, the intent to marry must be announced to the community by the posting of bans in a public place. After a mandatory waiting period, the marriage is officially concluded at a public ceremony, often ecclesiastical. Based on mutual consent, marriage requires the spouses to live together, to help each other, to remain faithful to one another, and to raise their children together. Either spouse can legally dissolve the marriage by requesting a physical separation. Throughout legal separation, which is always revocable, the spouses nevertheless maintain some of their reciprocal obligations and cannot remarry. Except when one of the partners dies, remarriage must be preceded by divorce: a legal sanction that dissolves the union irrevocably and frees both spouses from the marriage.

The marital relationship involves not only the husband and wife, but also their families. Through marriage, the wife’s parents become the husband’s allies, while the husband’s parents become the wife’s allies. Thus, the existence of the “in-law” family is distinct from the “original” family. Both spouses acquire in-laws with whom they will continue to interact throughout the marriage. These ties are strengthened when children are born because children “belong” to both families by blood, even though they are often given the father’s surname. With divorce, relationships with in-laws end or become more distant, except through the children as intermediaries.

The behaviour of Canadians regarding marriage has changed significantly over the past 20 years. Indeed, many new behaviours indicate that we have

arrived at a veritable "marriage crossroads": the future of the institution is in doubt. To understand the nature of this plight, a brief historical outline is needed.

For three and a half centuries - from the beginning of the country's colonial period until the 1960s - most Canadians saw marriage as a life-time commitment, and a necessary preliminary to defining a couple and to raising a family. Common-law relationships and illegitimate births seemed uncommon, except perhaps among native Canadians and in small communities that had not yet developed a structured social organization. Most marriages lasted until the death of a spouse, even after divorce laws were adopted in some parts of the country. As life expectancy increased, premature widowhood became less and less common, and the average length of marriages increased significantly.

Thus, barely 25 years ago, one could expect that the conjugal and parental lives of most Canadians would unfold within the framework of a single relationship sealed by marriage. Canada had just gone through a period when marriage was extremely popular, and divorce was frowned upon socially. At the same time, marriage had begun to transform in ways destined to make it more adaptable to social change. Women were granted more legal rights, making married life less one-sided. Divorce was about to become available in all provinces and the failure of a marriage recognized as a legitimate cause for divorce. These changes did not seem to radically undermine marriage, which continued to regulate the formation and lives of couples, as well as the addition of children to the chain of generations and the web of families.

However, in the past 20 years, attitudes towards marriage have changed profoundly. Marriage is no longer a lifetime commitment "for better or for worse"; a large minority of couples now divorce. Many Canadians of all age groups do not consider marriage a necessary condition to couple formation, and have chosen common-law arrangements - sometimes temporary, sometimes permanent. Births outside marriage are no longer exceptional, and the old distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate births have been abolished. These changes affecting the stability and exclusivity of marriage have not caused the phenomenon to disappear entirely. Overall, marriage is now less prevalent, occurs later in life, and often does not last long enough for couples to raise families.

This study analyzes the evolution of marriage from a demographic point of view. The first chapter covers marriage before 1921 - that is, before a national system for gathering vital statistics was introduced. The second chapter deals with first-time marriages since 1921, while the third chapter covers marriages among widowed and divorced persons. The fourth chapter deals with marriage dissolution and particularly with divorce rates since 1969. The fifth chapter examines aspects of the social demography of marriage, while the sixth chapter deals with the evolution of conjugal life, especially the recent transformations brought about by the effect of rising divorce rates, and the increase in common-law relationships.

# **Chapter 1**

## **MARRIAGE IN THE PAST**

This chapter deals with the history of marriage in Canada up to 1921 when a system for gathering vital statistics was introduced. This history has not been thoroughly studied; research to date covers only marriage rates of the first French-Canadian cohorts and of Canadian nineteenth century cohorts. This work will be described after a look at the origins and diversity of marriage law in Canada.

### **Origins and Diversity of the Law**

In Western marriage law, and thus in Canadian law, we can trace the contributions of three very old legal systems.<sup>1</sup> From Roman matrimonial law, established under the Roman Empire, we retained monogamous marriages with spousal consent, which are concluded at once, and not through different phases. From Canon law, formalized in the first centuries of this millennium, we retained the prohibition of marriage between close relatives, and the introduction of ecclesiastical marriage. In the Catholic religion since 1184, marriage has been a sacrament that cannot be dissolved by the spouses, even after physical separation. Secular law, developed early in the modern state, introduced the concept of marriage as a civil contract between two parties. This concept was also shared by Protestant law which later allowed divorce and civil marriage. These basics of marriage law were already endorsed by French and English law when Canada was colonized by the first European settlers.

When the French Crown established its colonies on the banks of the St. Lawrence River in the seventeenth century, it instituted Catholic marriage and the civil laws of France. Even after the French regime was superseded by British rule, these practices survived because the 1774 Quebec Act allowed French Canadians to keep their religion and civil law. One hundred years after the British conquest, the judges of Lower Canada wrote a Civil Code inspired by the Napoleonic Code as revised during the Restoration, and divorce was not legal. The marriage provisions of the 1866 Civil Code held in Quebec for almost a century. Non-Catholic marriages were recognized but Catholic marriages were the norm for most in Quebec of French origin, as well as for many immigrants, such as those from Ireland or Italy.

Elsewhere in Canada, the arrival of colonists from Great Britain or of loyalists from the United States was naturally accompanied by the introduction of English

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<sup>1</sup> Gaudemet, J. (1987) *Le mariage en Occident*, Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 525 p. (Histoire).

civil law.<sup>2</sup> As was the case in Britain, Anglican marriage requirements could not be imposed for long because there were too many members of other religions. Other religious marriages were recognized, as were civil marriages conducted by public officials. As well, cohabitation between unmarried people was considered a common-law marriage if the relationship was stable or resulted in children. The various colonies were free to adopt English divorce laws; however, only New Brunswick and Nova Scotia did so before the introduction of the British North America (BNA) Act in 1867.

The authors of the BNA Act respected regional diversity in marriage laws: provincial legislatures were granted authority over marriage, marriage annulment, legal separation, and the definition of the legal effects of the union. Jurisdiction over divorce was shared between the federal parliament and the provincial legislatures, the former enacting the law and the latter giving provincial courts authority to grant divorces. However, Quebec and Ontario did not endow their courts with this authority, and divorce was thus unobtainable in Canada's two most populated provinces (see Chapter 4). To protect the equality of all Canadians, the federal parliament – like the English Parliament of the time – reserved the right to grant divorce.

## Marriage in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

### The Marriage Registers

Because most parish registers maintained by the Catholic clergy still exist, Quebec has an unparalleled storehouse of records on the history of its population since 1621.<sup>3</sup> Under French rule, registries of baptisms, marriages, and burials were required by both the religious and civil authorities. The religious authorities were meeting the requirements of a resolution adopted by the Council of Trent (1563), and the civil authorities were implementing Royal directives based on the Villers-Cotterets (1593) and Blois (1579) Ordinances. After the fall of New France in 1760, the administrative and legal usefulness of this record-keeping was confirmed by an act of the Assembly of Lower Canada in 1795, and later, by the 1866 Civil Code. Thus, records on most of the Catholic marriages celebrated in Quebec since the arrival of the first French colonists are available.

Maintaining parish registers made it relatively easy for the Church and the state to reimpose control over marriage after the relaxation of morals during the Renaissance.<sup>4</sup> The Church could now ascertain that prospective spouses

<sup>2</sup> McKie, D.C., Prentice, B. and Reed, P. (1983) *Divorce Law: the Family in Canada*, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 280 p.

<sup>3</sup> Larose, A. (1980) *Les registres paroissiaux au Québec avant 1800: introduction à l'étude d'une institution ecclésiastique et civile*, Québec, Ministère des Affaires culturelles, (Études et recherches archivistiques n° 2).

<sup>4</sup> Leclerc, P.A. (1959-1960) "Le mariage sous le Régime français", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 13(2), pp. 230-246, 13(3), pp. 374-401, 13(4), 525-543, 14(1), 34-60, 14(2), 226-245.

**TABLE 1. Annual Number of Marriages and Average Annual Marriage Rate  
(per 1,000) for Five-year Periods, French-Canadian Population  
from 1711 to 1760 and Catholic Population  
from 1760 to 1880, Quebec**

Periods	Annual number of marriages	Average population	Average annual marriage rate (per 1,000)
1711-1715	188	19,800	9.5
1716-1720	236	22,900	10.3
1721-1725	257	27,200	9.4
1726-1730	323	31,600	10.2
1731-1735	359	36,200	9.9
1736-1740	375	42,300	8.9
1741-1745	426	49,100	8.7
1746-1750	566	55,000	10.3
1751-1755	617	61,200	10.1
1756-1760	670	67,200	10.0
1761-1765	866	74,400	11.6
1766-1770	717	86,200	8.3
1771-1775	903	98,100	9.2
1776-1780	895	110,400	8.1
1781-1785	1,023	125,700	8.1
1786-1790	1,163	141,900	8.2
1791-1795	1,482	160,300	9.2
1796-1800	1,521	183,700	8.3
1801-1805	1,829	208,900	8.8
1806-1810	1,989	238,600	8.3
1811-1815	2,440	269,300	9.1
1816-1820	2,606	307,000	8.5
1821-1825	3,031	349,800	8.7
1826-1830	3,457	401,200	8.6
1831-1835	4,276	453,600	9.4
1836-1840	3,898	517,000	7.5
1841-1845	5,157	590,300	8.7
1846-1850	5,407	650,000	8.3
1851-1855	6,033	735,000	8.2
1856-1860	6,238	820,000	7.6
1861-1865	7,191	900,000	8.0
1866-1870	7,186	980,000	7.3
1871-1875	8,728	1,060,000	8.2
1876-1880	8,006	1,120,000	7.1

Source: HENRIPIN, J. and PÉRON, Y., "The Demographic Transition of the Province of Quebec", in GLASS, D.V. et REVELLE, R., *Population and Social Change*, Londres, Edward Arnold, 1972, p. 230.

had reached the minimum age for marriage, that they were free of previous marital commitments, and that they were not too closely related by blood, relation, or spiritual affinity (a link created by Godparents at the time of baptism). Similarly, through the parish records, the State could better defend the interests of families by ensuring that a marriage was preceded by the posting of bans, that it took place in the presence of duly identified witnesses, and that the parents had given their approval or been notified. Once entered in the registry, the marriage ceremony became the necessary proof in law of a marriage, preferred over the testimony of the spouses or of third parties. This system aimed to prevent cohabitation, and to illegitimize marriage vows exchanged by young people during church masses without informing the priest or their families.

An annual record of Catholic marriages celebrated before 1884 was collected by Monsignor C. Tanguay and published with the results of the 1871 (Volume 5) and the 1881 (Volume 4) Censuses of Canada. Using Tanguay's figures, Henripin and Péron<sup>5</sup> calculated the average annual number of marriages per 1,000 residents in five-year periods from 1711-1715 to 1876-1880. These crude marriage rates are shown in Table 1, along with the data used to calculate them.

These crude rates show no distinct pattern, but three stages can be identified. Until 1761-1765, the crude marriage rate was high, fluctuating around an average of 9.9 per 1,000 population. In the last third of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, the annual average per 1,000 population was much lower: for the entire period, the average rate was 8.6 per 1,000. After 1850, the rates dropped slightly again, averaging about 7.8 per 1,000 for the next three decades. These changing rates suggest that marriage behaviour changed over the study period assuming that the structure of the population did not change greatly. This will be verified towards the end of this chapter.

### The Nuptiality Table of the First French-Canadian Cohorts

By regrouping information from parish registers, genealogists have created individual and family biographies of great demographic interest. A representative sample of these biographies was used by Charbonneau<sup>6</sup> to reconstruct the demographic history of the first French Canadian cohorts. Extracted from this reconstruction, Table 2 is the nuptiality table for men and women born in New France before 1740.

This table's advantages over the crude data can be illustrated by considering only the male cohorts. In the source material, first marriages are recorded for only 55% of males born before 1740; the others either died before marriage

<sup>5</sup> Henripin, J. and Péron, Y. (1972) "The demographic transition of the Province of Quebec", in Glass, D.V. and Revelle, R., *Population and social change*, London, Edward Arnold, 1972, pp. 213-231.

<sup>6</sup> Charbonneau, H. (1975) *Vie et mort de nos ancêtres*, Montréal, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 268 p.

TABLE 2. Nuptiality Table of Male and Female Canadian Cohorts, 1640-1739

Age $x$	$C_x$	Data				Nuptiality table			
		Marriages $M_x$	Deaths $D_x$	Missing $E_x$	Number of cases $C_x - D_x + E_x$	First marriage probability $s_x^n$ (per 1,000)	Singles $C_x$ (per 1,000)	First marriages $m(x, x+5)$	
Female cohorts									
10	1,444	59	20	7	1,431	41	1,000	41	
15	1,358	465	27	5	1,342	346	959	332	
20	861	479	19	2	851	563	627	353	
25	361	176	8	2	356	494	274	135	
30	175	50	6	5	170	294	139	41	
35	114	25	3	2	112	223	98	22	
40	84	11	8	1	80	138	76	10	
45	65	2	2	0	64	31	66	2	
50	61	..	..	..	..	..	64	..	
Male cohorts									
15	1,439	25	32	23	1,412	18	1,000	18	
20	1,359	425	49	27	1,321	322	982	316	
25	858	429	19	20	839	511	666	340	
30	390	180	16	11	377	477	326	156	
35	183	77	8	8	175	440	170	75	
40	90	21	5	9	83	253	95	24	
45	55	5	5	4	51	98	71	7	
50	41	..	..	..	..	..	64	..	

Source: CHARBONNEAU, H., *Vie et mort de nos ancêtres*, Montréal, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1975, pp. 162-163.

or were "lost from sight" to genealogists when they were children or single. Since the majority of these deaths or missed observations happened before the men were of marriageable age, the proportion found (55%) does not accurately show male marriage behaviour. A better understanding of marriage rates can be obtained by looking only at boys who were alive and under observation on their fifteenth birthday. In this group, proof of marriage before the age of 50 was found for 81%. However, the rate for this group is also misleading because it does not account for single males who died or dropped from observation between the ages of 15 and 50. The influence of premature deaths and "Disappearances" varies greatly from one population to another, and thus these effects should be eliminated when we compare two or more populations. The singles nuptiality table makes this elimination up to age 50; after this age, first marriages are rare for both sexes and childbirth is uncommon for women. For male cohorts, there were 936 first marriages before the age of 50 per 1,000 of those who were single at 15 and who did not subsequently die or drop from observation before marrying.

The table makes it possible to derive three particularly telling indices of marriage behaviour among singles. The first, called marriage intensity, is the proportion of singles who marry before the age of 50: it was 0.936 or 93.6% for men and women born before 1740. The second index, complementary to the first, measures the proportion never-married - 0.064 or 6.4% for this population. The third index indicates mean age at marriage, which summarizes the distribution of marriages in the table by age - this is sometimes called the marriage tempo. For the female cohorts shown in Table 2, the mean age was 21.8; for the male cohorts it was 27.3. These indices, or their estimates, will be used to describe the marriage behaviour of different cohorts.

### **Proportion Never-Married and Age at First Marriage**

According to the nuptiality tables for New France before 1740 (Table 2), single men and single women had an equal propensity towards marriage, with only 6.4% of both sexes never marrying. As is always the case, women tended to marry earlier than men; however, the difference between male and female mean ages was 5.5 years, a much larger gap than is usual. The table also shows that some girls were married at a particularly early age. Since the twelfth century, the Church had set the minimum age for marriage at 12 for girls and 14 for boys. This restriction was probably aimed at important families who often arranged marriages between very young children to ensure future alliances for themselves. Still, relatively early marriages were encouraged by the Crown which, in its desire to populate the colony, enticed parents to marry-off their daughters before the age of 16, and their sons before the age of 20. In the same vein, it also asked them not to abuse their right to refuse permission for a marriage when the prospective bride was under 25, or the groom was under 30. However, these royal recommendations probably influenced the early marriage of women much

**TABLE 3. Frequency of Never-married Persons and Average Age at First Marriage Among French-Canadian Cohorts, 1640-1739**

Cohorts	Frequency of never-married persons (in %)		Average age at first marriage (in years)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1640-1679	7.0	7.5	27.6	19.7
1680-1699	7.5	7.2	27.6	22.3
1700-1739	5.0	4.6	26.7	22.9
All	6.4	6.4	27.3	21.8

Source: CHARBONNEAU, H., *Vie et mort de nos ancêtres*, Étude démographique, Montréal, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1975, p. 268.

less than the fundamental imbalance between the sexes that characterized the marriage market in the first decades of the colony.

According to a recent estimate,<sup>7</sup> about 14,400 French immigrants came to New France during the course of the seventeenth century; most were single men, particularly young soldiers and workers indentured for three years of labour. To compensate for very low female immigration – under 15% of the total – Louis XIV recruited young women of marriageable age in France: almost 800 “Filles du Roy” arrived in the colony between 1663 and 1673. This was not enough to accommodate the demand for wives, and thus many male immigrants returned to France. Of all the French men and women who came to the colony before 1700, only 5,000 put down roots, and of these there were two men for every woman.

Among immigrants who had lineage in the colony, there were twice as many males as females since a large amount of them were able to find wives among the first generation of women born in the colony. But the first generation of men faced competition from new immigrants as well as from one another when they reached the normal age for marriage. The effects of this imbalance between males and females of marriageable age can be observed in Table 3.

The most obvious effect was that female cohorts of 1640-1679 had a high proportion of early marriages. In this period, the most sought-after generations had reached marriageable age in the third quarter of the seventeenth century; their numbers were very low compared to the volume of male immigration. This

<sup>7</sup> Charbonneau, H., Desjardins, B., Guillemette, A., Landry, Y., Légaré, J. et Nault, F. (1987) *Naissances d'une population. Les Français établis au Canada au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 232 p. (Travaux et documents de l'I.N.E.D. n° 118).

imbalance diminished as the colony's population grew quickly and male immigration declined. Very early marriages became more rare, and the average age of young women at marriage rose to over 22 in the 1680-1699 cohorts. In the cohorts of the first four decades of the eighteenth century, the average age rose again to reach 23, that is three years older than the last cohorts preceding 1680.

The imbalance of the sexes affected male marriage rates more modestly. According to the values observed for the last cohorts (1700-1739), it can be concluded that men of the earliest cohorts married slightly less often and a little later than they would have had the imbalance of sex not been as large. Many married widows their own age or – as the larger difference between the mean ages of men and women at first marriage indicates – they waited for an available woman to reach marriageable age. As often happens in similar situations, the French Canadian population adapted to the imbalance in the sexes caused by immigration by modifying the selection of the spouse. This allowed male marriage rates to be at the same level as those for females.

The New France cohorts of 1700-1739 had earlier and more prevalent marriage than did corresponding French-born cohorts. According to the work of Henry and Houdaille (1978, 1979), the mean age of French women at marriage was 26, compared to 28 for French men; the proportion of never-married persons was 8.5% for women and 6.5% for men. From the beginning of the seventeenth century, mean age at first marriage had been increasing, especially for women.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Loss of a Spouse and Remarriage**

A high mortality rate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries meant that many spouses died relatively young. At the time of their first marriage, men and women could expect to live another 30 years. The life expectancy of the marriage was 20 years, and less than 20% of couples lived until the marriage of their youngest child. Because of the age difference between husband and wife, women were slightly more likely than men to lose their spouses.

According to the biographies used by Charbonneau,<sup>9</sup> half of all widowers remarried, as did over one-third of widows. The frequency of remarriage was particularly high among women widowed before the age of 30 (90%) and among men widowed before the age of 40 (85%). The average period between the death of the spouse and remarriage was 2.3 years for men and 3.1 years for women. Unstable socio-economic conditions motivated widows and widowers to form new unions if death had interrupted the previous ones. Often numerous and young children needed either someone to bring revenues to the family or some domestic care, which a second marriage could offer, since social welfare was non-existent at the time.

<sup>8</sup> Dupaquier, J. (1979) *La population française aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris, P.U.F., 127 p. (Que sais-je?).

<sup>9</sup> Op. cit. 1975.

## The Convention of Marriage

In frontier areas, cohabitation between whites and natives was tolerated. In the heart of the colony, cohabitation was forbidden, and marriage was almost universal for both sexes (Table 2). Furthermore, the Catholic requirements of marriage seem to have been generally met, judging by the low number of illegitimate births and pre-marital conceptions: of all births registered before 1730, only 1.25% were illegitimate.<sup>10</sup> Based on the number of first-order births occurring in the first eight months of marriage, only 6.1% of all conceptions were pre-marital for marriages celebrated before 1725. These rates are comparable to those observed in rural France during the same period.

## Marriage in Cohorts of the Last Century

### The Proportion Remaining Single at Age 50

Except for the 1901 Census, every Canadian census since the middle of the nineteenth century has classified Canadians by marital status. Hence we possess decennial figures on the distribution of the Canadian population by sex, age, and marital status. However, census figures are not always immediately comparable because of varying age groups and fluctuations in the number of Canadians who failed to report marital status. However, with some corrections and adjustments, one can totally or partially reconstitute the marriage rates of a large number of cohorts. Lachapelle<sup>11</sup> and Festy<sup>12</sup> have adjusted the census data to account for these problems. Table 4, based on their work, shows the proportion remaining single at age 50 in a series of Canadian cohorts over the past century.

When calculated for all persons having been exposed to the risk of first marriage for the entire period, the proportion remaining single at age 50 is a good approximation of the proportion never-married. It is not perfect because it can be affected by systematic enumeration errors or by mistakes in classifying individuals by marital status, as well as by differences in mortality and mobility between single and married persons. For example, in a population with higher mortality for singles than for married persons, the latter are over-represented among survivors at 50. Consequently, the proportion remaining single at that same age would be smaller than the proportion never-married. Emigration favouring singles would have the same effect. On the other hand, immigration policies favouring singles will have the opposite effect. Despite these limitations, the "single at 50" measure has been shown to accurately reflect the number of never-married individuals in a cohort or group of cohorts.

<sup>10</sup> Paquette, L. et Bates, R. (1986) "Les naissances illégitimes sur les rives du Saint-Laurent avant 1730". *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 40(2), pp. 239-252.

<sup>11</sup> Lachapelle, R. (1971) *Étude démographique de la nuptialité canadienne*, Montréal, 214 p. (Mémoire de maîtrise, Département de démographie, Université de Montréal).

<sup>12</sup> Festy, P., (1973) "Canada, United States, Australia and New Zealand: Nuptiality trends", *Population Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 479-492.

TABLE 4. Proportion Married and Single at Age 50, Canada,  
1826-1830 to 1901-1905 Cohorts

Cohorts	Proportion married (in %)		Proportion single at age 50 (in %)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1826-1830	90.5	..	9.5	..
1831-1835	90.5	89.5	9.5	10.5
1836-1840	90.5	89.5	9.5	10.5
1841-1845	90.0	89.5	10.0	10.5
1846-1850	89.0	89.0	11.0	11.0
1851-1855	88.0	88.5	12.0	11.5
1856-1860	86.9	88.0	13.1	12.0
1861-1865	85.3	88.4	14.7	11.6
1866-1870	86.7	88.4	13.3	11.6
1871-1875	86.2	89.2	13.8	10.8
1876-1880	86.4	89.1	13.6	10.9
1881-1885	86.3	89.9	13.7	10.1
1886-1890	86.6	89.4	13.4	10.6
1891-1895	86.1	89.1	13.9	10.9
1896-1900	86.9	88.8	13.1	11.2
1901-1905	87.2	88.7	12.8	11.3

Source: LACHAPELLE, R., *Étude démographique de la nuptialité canadienne*, Montréal, 1971, p. 54, (Mémoire de maîtrise, Département de démographie, Université de Montréal). FESTY, P., "Canada, United States, Australia and New Zealand: Nuptiality Trends", *Population Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3, nov. 1973, p. 491.

Table 4 shows a significant change in the never-married proportion for male and female cohorts in the nineteenth century. For male cohorts, the proportion never-married at 50 jumped from under 10% in the first groups to a high of 14.7% in the 1861-1865 cohorts, subsequently stabilizing at between 13% and 14%. For female cohorts, the pattern was similar, with the proportion of singles at 50 rising from 10.5% in the first groups to a high of 12% in the 1856-1861 cohorts, and then fluctuating around 11% for the last cohorts. Thus, fewer men and women born in the second half of the nineteenth century married than did their predecessors.

### The Mean Age at Marriage

By considering the distribution of the population by marital status for a given year, a mean marriage age can be deduced using calculations developed by J. Hajnal.<sup>13</sup> The calculations have been applied to data from the decennial censuses. Following the example of E. Gee,<sup>14</sup> we can attribute the results from

<sup>13</sup> Hajnal, J. (1953) "Age at marriage and proportions marrying", *Population Studies*, 7(2), 115-136.

<sup>14</sup> Gee, E.M. (1986) "The life course of canadian women: An historical and demographic analysis", *Social indicators research*, 18, pp. 263-283.

**TABLE 5. Estimated Mean Age at First Marriage, Canada,  
1821-1830 to 1891-1900 Cohorts**

Cohort	Males	Females
1821-1830	26.1	23.0
1831-1840	27.1	24.5
1841-1850	28.1	25.4
1851-1860	27.9	25.1
1861-1870	29.1	26.0
1871-1880	..	..
1881-1890	28.6	24.3
1891-1900	27.3	23.7

Source: GEE, E.M. Thomas, "Marriage in Nineteenth-Century Canada", *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 19(3), 1982, p.315. STONE, L.O. et SIGGNER, A.J. (Ed.), *The Population of Canada: A Review of the Recent Patterns and Trends*, Paris, C.I.C.R.E.D., 1974.

a census to cohorts aged from 20-29 at the beginning of the census year. For example, the mean ages taken from the 1891 Census may be attributed to the 1861-1870 cohorts. Table 5 was obtained in this way. Of course, the authors do not intend to offer a precise estimate of the mean age within the cohort, but only an indication of the most likely changes of the mean age, from one cohort to the next. It is understood that, taking an age group from the census implies that it is used as a "proxy" of an age group from a real cohort.

The mean age at marriage followed a pattern similar to that for the proportion of never-married. From the first cohorts to those for 1861-1870, the age at marriage rose by three years - from 26 to 29 for men and from 23 to 26 for women. From these highs, mean age decreased about two years for the 1891-1900 cohorts. Thus, Canadians born in the 1860s married later than the other cohorts.

### Late and Non-Universal Marriage

Analyzing the results of censuses conducted in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, J. Hajnal<sup>15</sup> observed that first marriages took place later and were less universal north and west of a line between Trieste and Leningrad than south and east of that line, as well as in other parts of the world. He proposed a marriage model specific to the people of Northern and Western Europe. In these populations, the mean age at first marriage was above 23 for women and above 26 for men. For the remaining populations, it was under 21 for women and 26 for men. The proportion of never-married was also higher for the

<sup>15</sup> Hajnal, J. (1965) "European marriage patterns in historical perspective", in Glass, D.V. and Eversley, E.E.C., *Population in history: Essays in historical demography*, London, Edward Arnold, pp. 101-143.

TABLE 6. Mean Age at First Marriage and Proportion Married at Age 50,  
Women Born around 1840-1850 in Selected Western Countries

Country	Cohorts	Mean age (in years)	Proportion ever-married at age 50 (in %)
Denmark	1835-1844	27.1	88.4
Finland	1846-1850	25.5	85.6
Norway	1836-1845	27.2	83.0
Sweden	1836-1845	27.5	82.4
England and Wales	1836-1845	25.2	87.6
Scotland	1836-1845	26.0	81.3
Ireland	1836-1845	26.4	81.5
Belgium	1836-1845	27.7	82.5
France	1836-1845	24.7	86.9
Netherlands	1836-1845	27.5	86.3
Germany	1856-1860	25.8	89.5
Switzerland	1836-1845	27.5	81.6
Italy	1842-1846	24.0	88.3
Portugal	1846-1855	26.0	78.0
Canada	1846-1850	25.0	89.7
U.S. (whites only)	1836-1845	24.0	92.7

Source: FESTY, P., *La fécondité des pays occidentaux de 1870 à 1970*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1979, pp. 21 et 29, (Travaux et documents de l'I.N.E.D., cahier n° 85).

Northern and Western population, in which the proportion never-married at age 50 ranges between 10% and 20%; for other populations, it is never above 5%. Table 6 shows this late and non-universal marriage pattern for female cohorts born around 1840-1850.

This pattern existed in many countries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – before the industrialization and urbanization that characterized the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> The predominance of the nuclear family and the stem family in Western countries (which will be described later) undoubtedly favoured late marriage; in Eastern Europe and Asiatic countries, where the extended family was the rule, marriage occurred earlier. Where the nuclear family was the norm, marriage involved forming an independent household, separate from the parents, and this required a large investment at a time when households were the unit for the production of goods and services. To afford a marriage, young people often had to spend several years doing paid work as domestics. In areas where the stem family was the rule, the land and family home were reserved for a single child, and only this heir could expect to marry and live with the parents;

<sup>16</sup> Hajnal, J. (1982) "Two kinds of preindustrial household formation system", *Population and development review*, 8(3), Sept., pp. 449-494.

the other children had to either remain single or leave the family home. Conversely, the extended family, which was not widespread in Western Europe, favours early marriage because children can continue to live with their parents after marriage. Thus, it is understandable that late marriage was deeply rooted in Western habits.

The solidity of late and non-universal marriage in Western and Northern Europe undoubtedly explains why this pattern was established in Canada. All the female cohorts in Tables 4 and 5 conform to this pattern. This is not surprising, given the degree to which Canada's population originated from Western European immigrants.



## **Chapter 2**

### **THE PATTERNS OF FIRST MARRIAGES SINCE 1921**

Information on the marital behaviour of Canadians has been abundant since a vital statistics program was established in 1921.<sup>17</sup> The introduction of marriage certificates has given us information on how many people are married each year and how they are distributed by characteristics such as age and previous marital status. Combined with population estimates, these marriage data provide indicators that help delineate the evolution of Canadian marriage behaviour over the past 60 years.

Although this chapter focusses on behaviour of individuals for first marriages, the evolution of all marriages is briefly discussed in the first section. The second section presents an analysis of annual data on first marriages. In the third section, the same annual data are examined by cohort to reveal changes in the prevalence and timing of first marriages. Finally, in the fourth section, recent survey data are used to determine how the behaviour of singles has changed over the past 15 years. Marriage patterns for widowed or divorced persons is discussed in the next chapter.

#### **The Evolution of the Crude Marriage Rate**

To track the annual number of marriages in Canada, the “crude marriage rate” can be used; that is, the number of marriages per 1,000 population. This indicator is more useful than the absolute number of marriages because long-term variations in numbers are obviously influenced by the size of the population. Figure 1 shows graphically crude marriage rates since 1921, and allows to identify key periods in the evolution of marriage in Canada.

As shown, the crude marriage rate has undergone major oscillations since 1921. Marriages were particularly numerous during Second World War (1939 to 1943), in the immediate post-war period (1945-1951), and in 1972 and 1973. On the other hand, fewer marriages than usual occurred during the Great Depression of the 1930s (1931 to 1934), during an economic recession at the beginning of the 1960s (1961 to 1963), and during the past few years. The lowest rate was in 1932 (5.9 marriages per 1,000 population), and the highest rate was in 1942 and 1946 (10.9 per 1,000 population).

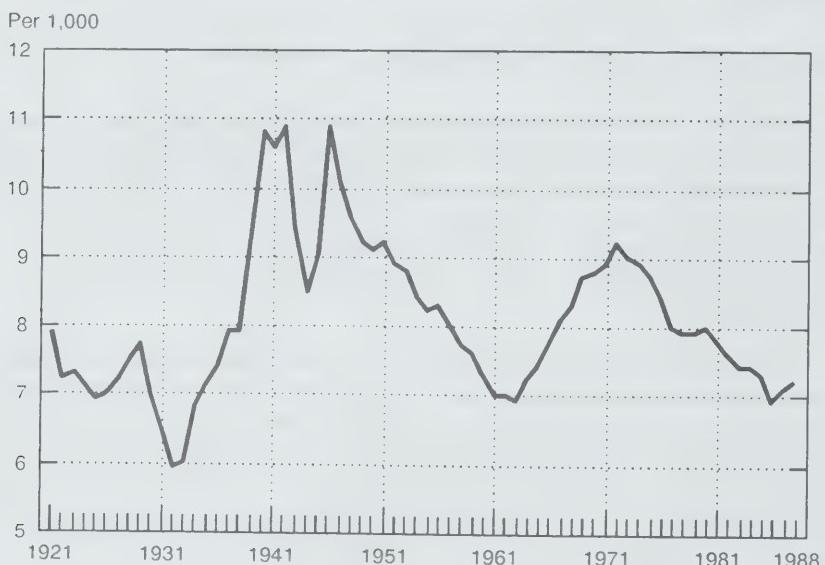
Figure 1 also shows that the drop in the crude rate from 1972 to 1986 was no larger than the drop from 1951 to 1963.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, recent rates are comparable

<sup>17</sup> 1926 for Quebec, and 1949 for Newfoundland.

<sup>18</sup> A drop of 13%, compared to 20%.

Figure 1

### Changes in the Crude Marriage Rates, Canada, 1921-1988



Source: *Table I.*

to those at the beginning of the 1960s, and are higher than rates during the 1930s. Thus, if only the crude marriage rate is considered, there is no reason to say that marriage is now undergoing a crisis unprecedented in Canada's recent history.

This somewhat surprising finding draws attention to the limitations of the crude rate as an index of marriage behaviour. While the rate does account for the size effect of the population, it does not deal with many other factors, the most important of which is the variation in the number of marriageable and unmarriageable people. In the 1980s, never-married or divorced young adults were a much larger proportion of the total population than in the 1960s, which means that the similarity between the crude rates at an interval of twenty-five years masks profound changes in marital behaviour.

### First Marriages over the Years

#### Factors and Methods

Because many marriages are the first for one partner but not for the other, first marriages are usually studied separately for men and women. For instance, first marriages for women refer to the fact that the woman was single before marrying, regardless of the previous marital status of her spouse. The same logic

is applied to men's first marriages. Only first marriages for those under 50 are taken into account because first marriages at older ages are uncommon.

The number of first marriages during a year depends primarily on four demographic factors, which can be illustrated using the example of first marriages for females aged 25. One can assume that:

1. The number of marriages at age 25 is influenced by the number of never-married individuals of that age. The ratio of marriages at age 25 to the single female population of the same age is the "first marriage rate at age 25".
2. The number of never-married 25 year-old women is affected by the number of women of that age. The ratio of the never-married to the total age group is the "proportion of 25-year-old singles".
3. The number of 25 year-old women is in turn affected by the total number of women. The ratio of 25 year-old to all women is the "proportion of 25 year old women."

Assuming that " $P$ " represents the number of women of all ages, " $F$ " the number of 25 year-old women, " $C$ " the number of 25 year-old singles, and " $M$ " the number of first female marriages at that age, the following equation can be written:

$$M = P \times (F:P) \times (C:F) \times (M:C)$$

This formula, which also applies to other ages, indicates that the number of first female marriages in a year depends upon the size of the female population (size factor), its age composition (age factor), the proportion of never-married individuals at each age (single-life factor) and, finally, the marriage rate of the never-married at each age (nuptiality factor) which is also the propensity to marry. Obviously, the number of first male marriages depends upon the same four factors.

Demographic analysis offers two methods for measuring the frequency of first marriages in a year or over a short period. The first method neutralizes the effect of the "size" and "age" factors by calculating, by sex and age, the number of first marriages per 1,000 population of the same gender, regardless of the marital status: this is known as "first marriage frequency". The second method, which accounts for all factors except the "nuptiality" factor, applies marriage rates calculated for each age to a fictitious cohort: this is known as the "calendar-year nuptiality tables" method. The results provided by these two methods are analyzed in the next two sections.

#### **First Method: First Marriage Frequency and Annual Movement of First Marriages**

To follow annual fluctuations in the number of first marriages, normally the first marriage frequency is used. Calculated by age, these frequencies measure first marriages per 1,000 males or females in the age category under consideration

regardless of their present marital status. Their sum for all ages under 50 is the "total first marriage rate". Their distribution by age is summarized by the "mean age of first marriage" index.<sup>19</sup> Values for these two measures since 1921 are given in Figures 2 and 3; Appendix A describes the data used for the calculations.

First marriages in a particular year involve members of more than 30 successive cohorts – obviously, the same is true of first marriage frequencies. Each cohort's contribution to the annual index is its number of marriages, which depends upon the cohort's never-married proportion and its propensity to marry during that particular year. In other words, the annual indices are not only affected by the marriage rates of singles during the year, but throughout the proportions of never-married, they are also affected by the marriage rates of each cohort in previous years. This double dependence explains many of the fluctuations in first marriages since 1921. In particular, it explains how the first marriage frequency can be greater than 1 (or 1,000 if the radix is 1,000 single persons). Indeed, the first marriage frequency is, by its own mode of calculation, influenced by the marriage rates of previous years. If these marriage rates were low for young people in the previous years, the proportion of marriageable persons at a later age will be great and even though these persons may not have a strong propensity to marry, the index would not reflect it. Indeed, the index would be high, simply because of the great proportion of marriageable persons within the total population. Furthermore, if the propensity to marry expands in all age groups, the first marriage frequencies could then increase greatly, and even add up to more than 1,000. An example of this situation is the behaviour of Canadian men and women at the beginning of the Second World War. This will be analyzed later on.

In the 1920s, variations in the marriage-rate indices were minor compared with the 1930s and 1940s. The most notable shift was the drop in the number of marriages around the middle of the decade, probably caused by temporary economic difficulties. The indices suggest that the late and non-universal marriage model was still widespread in those cohorts that accounted for most marriages – cohorts born around 1900.

Marriage rates in the 1930s were affected by the Great Depression, which began in 1929. Bankruptcies and cutbacks in economic activity led to a major increase in unemployment, the immediate effect of which was the abandonment or postponement of many marriages. The total marriage rates dropped in 1930 and again in the two following years. The lowest point was in 1932, with 653 first male marriages and 660 first female marriages per 1,000 of each population. The drop in marriages affected almost all age groups equally, and the average age

<sup>19</sup> The reader should note that, since this index indicates a trend and since first marriage, because of its nature, occurs mostly among young adults, variations of about 1/10 of a year may reveal a change.

Figure 2

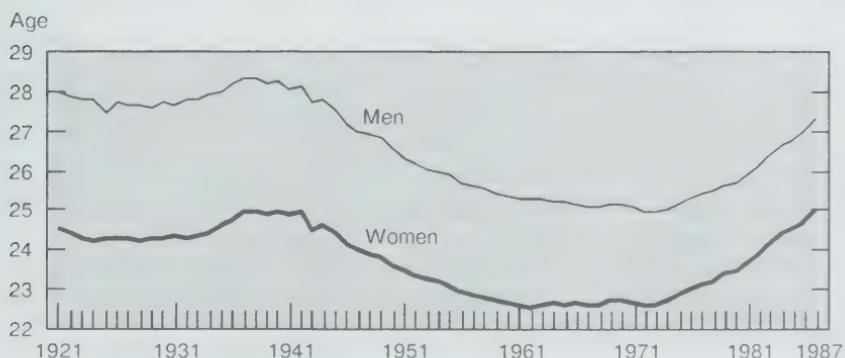
**Changes in the Total Marriage Rates for Men and Women,  
Canada, 1921 to 1987**



Source: *Table II.*

Figure 3

**Mean Age at First Marriage by Sex, Canada, 1921-1987**



Source: *Table II.*

at marriage barely varied during these three crisis years. The progressive improvement in the economic situation subsequently led to an increase in marriages; single Canadians unable to marry during the Depression began to marry. Younger Canadians, in fact, married at about the same rate as their elders had in 1933.<sup>20</sup> As a result, the rise in total rates after 1934 was accompanied by an increase in mean age at marriage. In 1937 and 1938, the total rates rose to pre-Depression levels; still, some marriages delayed by the poor economic climate did not in fact take place. A cohort analysis illustrates this fact.

The Second World War caused an upswing in marriages culminating in 1940, 1941 and 1942. Canada entered the war in 1939, but was geographically far from the battlefield, and thus initially sent only career soldiers and volunteers. Conscription was extensively debated, and was not decided upon until a 1942 referendum. During these years of uncertainty, the prospect of being drafted into the armed forces was a potent stimulant to marriage for young single males, since they would be called first to go to war. At the same time, the poor economic climate of the 1930s had kept an abnormally large number of young people single. Thus, the total first marriage rates rose to a seemingly paradoxical 1,200 for males and females per 1,000 population of the same sex. This increase was subsequently held in check by conscription, with total rates dropping below 1,000 in the last two years of the war.

The immediate post-war years were marked by a high number of marriages celebrated at increasingly younger ages. Many marriages postponed by the war took place in 1946, resulting in total rates similar to those at the start of the war. In 1947, the rates dropped significantly but remained above 1,000 for the next 12 years. It is because, at the same time, late marriages became less and less common and the mean age at marriage dropped from year to year. In the 1950s, the mean age was about two years lower for both sexes than it had been in the 1920s. A methodical examination of the rates per year of age, as seen in the appendix, will allow the reader to better follow the evolution of this behaviour (Figure 3).

Clearly the marriage behaviour of singles changed profoundly during the 1940s and 1950s. Table 7 makes this clear: the first three censuses after the war show a sharp decline in young singles compared to previous census results. This is also evident in Table 8: during the 1950s, the marriage rate of never-married singles aged 20-24 continued to increase, becoming significantly higher than in 1940-42. Thus, the new generations abandoned the late, non-universal marriage model – they were more likely to marry than their elders, at increasingly early ages. This persistent trend is responsible for the unusually high number of marriages in the 1950s, which temporarily raised the total first marriage rates above 1,000.

<sup>20</sup> Dumas, J. (1987) "L'évolution des premiers mariages au Canada", *Cahiers québécois de démographie*, 16(2), pp. 237-265.

**TABLE 7. Proportion Remaining Single in Three Different Age Groups, Canada, 1911 to 1986**

Year	Males (in %)			Females (in %)		
	20-24	25-29	30-34	20-24	25-29	30-34
1911	83.5	55.3	35.2	59.7	32.4	20.5
1921	81.9	47.7	27.9	57.0	28.7	17.2
1931	85.6	52.2	29.1	63.1	32.4	18.7
1941	83.7	49.7	29.0	61.0	32.9	21.1
1951	74.4	35.1	19.6	48.5	20.7	13.8
1956	72.2	33.9	18.7	44.3	18.2	11.6
1961	69.5	29.6	17.4	40.5	15.4	10.6
1966	70.0	27.4	15.1	44.2	14.9	9.3
1971	67.6	25.6	13.3	43.5	15.4	9.1
1976	67.7	27.0	13.1	45.3	16.3	9.1
1981	78.7	38.1	17.6	59.6	24.5	12.2
1986	86.2	48.8	24.8	70.7	33.5	16.9

Sources: STONE, L.O. et SIGGNER, A.J. (1974), *The Population of Canada: A Review of the Recent Patterns and Trends*, Ottawa, p. 43, (C.I.C.R.E.D. Series). Census of Canada, 1976, 1981 and 1986. Authors' calculations include singles living in common-law unions.

**TABLE 8. First Marriage Rate for Singles Aged 20-24, 25-29 and 30-34, Canada, 1930-1932 to 1985-1987 (per 1,000)**

Year	Males			Females		
	20-24	25-29	30-34	20-24	25-29	30-34
1930-1932	..	..	..	102.8	98.0	56.6
1940-1942	96.6	169.0	143.1	169.4	168.5	105.3
1950-1952	133.4	174.5	120.3	202.2	159.8	86.2
1955-1957	142.0	170.6	100.5	219.6	162.8	82.5
1960-1962	149.1	169.3	90.9	225.5	145.2	70.1
1965-1967	159.0	195.7	96.2	225.3	152.6	67.2
1970-1972	158.3	188.1	105.0	220.6	150.1	74.4
1975-1977	122.4	153.7	96.1	174.6	137.0	72.5
1980-1982	82.7	115.7	76.3	122.8	109.3	58.8
1985-1987	55.6	96.3	68.6	92.1	99.8	56.9

Sources: BASAVARAJAPPA, K.G. (1978) *Marital Status and Marriages in Canada* (1971 Census of Canada, Profile Studies). Vital Statistics, *Marriage and Divorce*, Vol. II, Catalogue No. 84-205 1986 Census of Canada, *Age, Sex, and Marital Status*, Catalogue No. 93-101. Authors' calculations include singles living in common-law unions for the years 1980-1982 and 1985-1986.

The 1960s and the early years of the 1970s were relatively stable as the new marriage model became established. The mean age at first marriage stabilized at a little above 22.5 for women and 25 for men. The total rates indicate that slightly above 900 females out of 1,000 were marrying before age 50. For males the total marriage rates climbed above 1,000 for several years in a row, partly because of poorer estimates of the male population, and partly because of the more advantageous position of men in a marriage market suddenly flooded with the first female "baby boom" generations to reach marrying age.

Although following three decades in which marriage was highly popular, the current "marriage plight" began about 1973. Rates for the never-married dropped significantly and uninterruptedly, reaching, in the 1980s, levels comparable to those at the height of the Great Depression (Table 8). This decline led to a corresponding increase in the proportions of young singles, which also reached or surpassed levels of the 1930s (Table 7). Necessarily opposed, the rate of marriage and the proportion of singles characterize the new marriage behaviours.

Since 1973, the drop in the total first marriage rates has occurred in two phases separated by a temporary stabilization from 1978 to 1980 (Figure 2 and Table II). In the first phase, the drop was very rapid and had a greater impact because the strong marriage trends of previous years had left relatively few Canadians single. In the second phase, the drop in rates was more moderate because the proportion of singles had increased considerably in the young age groups. From 1973 to 1988, the total rates dropped by about one-third. Since 1983, they have been below the rates 1932 and 1933.

Today, first marriages are not only less prevalent, they are also taking place later: the mean age at marriage is now 25 for women and over 27 for men. This is an increase of more than two years since the beginning of the 1970s. Such a large increase may mean that the most recent total rates are underestimating the prevalence of marriage in those cohorts currently of marrying age.

### **Second Method: Nuptiality Tables**

Using the annual or longer-term marriage rates of the never-married over a year or a short period, it is possible to build nuptiality tables; these are known as "calendar year" tables, to distinguish them from those for real cohorts. In effect, based on the same principles as life tables, calendar year tables present the marriage behaviour of a fictitious cohort of singles that marries in the same proportions as its peers did over the course of the year or the period under study. According to this model, a reduction in the numbers of single persons with age would only be due to marriages, excluding mortality and emigration. In particular, these tables provide an estimate of first marriages before age 50 and of mean age at first marriage. Table 9 shows figures from such tables for three-year periods centred on census years.

**TABLE 9. First Marriages Before Age 50 per 1,000 Singles at Age 15 and Mean Age at First Marriage according to the Nuptiality Tables, Canada, Males and Females, 1930-1932 to 1985-1987**

Year	Marriages before age 50		Mean age at first marriage	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1930-1932	..	834	..	25.11
1940-1942	953	958	26.77	23.64
1950-1952	950	958	25.50	22.57
1955-1957	937	962	25.21	22.22
1960-1962	932	953	25.04	22.28
1965-1967	946	953	24.74	22.51
1970-1972	950	954	24.81	22.60
1975-1977	919	927	25.75	23.47
1980-1982	840	853	27.05	24.81
1985-1987	785	803	28.42	26.06

Source: See Appendix B.

Calendar year tables for 1950-52 to 1970-72 show prevalent and relatively early marriage for both sexes. At age 50, a cohort marrying at the rates of this period would have about 5% never-married – a little less for women and a little more for men. The mean age at marriage for the members of this fictitious cohort would be around 22.5 for women and 25 for men. Clearly, this means that singles had unequivocally abandoned the late and non-universal marriage model of their elders.<sup>21</sup>

More recent tables offer different and varying results. They confirm a decrease in the frequency of marriage and suggest that 20% of each cohort is likely to remain never-married at age 50. Although less frequent, marriage also takes place much later, with the mean age at first marriage exceeding 26 in women and 28 in men. This trend is the result of large numbers of couples living together as a prelude or substitute to marriage.

### Cohort Marriage Behaviour

The data used to study the annual fluctuations of first marriages can also be examined by cohort, rather than by year of marriage (see the base rates table in appendix). This approach gives first marriage frequencies from age 15 to 49 for the 30 cohorts<sup>22</sup> whose members married after 1920 and reached age 50 before 1989. In this case, it is not a fictitious cohort made up of individuals from different ages and to whom standard behaviours are attributed,

<sup>21</sup> It is not surprising that these values are different from those annually published by Statistics Canada in *Marriage and Divorce* (Cat. 84-205). This publication offers the mean age at first marriage by year rather than by cohort.

<sup>22</sup> Since the data is available for only a short period, we can only identify the behaviour of older cohorts at later ages, and of younger cohorts, at the beginning of their adult life.

TABLE 10. Mean Age at First Marriage and Intensity of Marriage,  
Canada, 1906-1938 Cohorts

Cohorts	Mean age at first marriage		Intensity of marriage (per 1,000)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1906	28.40	24.75	883	853
1907	28.37	24.95	884	877
1908	28.39	24.98	891	871
1909	28.36	25.06	893	874
1910	28.32	25.10	890	871
1911	28.24	25.11	887	869
1912	28.12	25.09	893	876
1913	27.94	25.03	893	883
1914	27.75	24.92	892	888
1915	27.54	24.77	892	893
1916	27.33	24.60	885	893
1917	27.13	24.44	868	885
1918	26.96	24.25	869	892
1919	26.81	24.08	876	903
1920	26.67	23.92	884	913
1921	26.54	23.79	889	921
1922	26.40	23.64	905	931
1923	26.24	23.52	909	926
1924	26.09	23.42	908	919
1925	25.97	23.32	910	915
1926	25.85	23.21	921	919
1927	25.74	23.10	925	922
1928	25.65	23.00	935	932
1929	25.56	22.89	949	945
1930	25.45	22.77	956	957
1931	25.36	22.66	956	959
1932	25.28	22.56	953	959
1933	25.21	22.46	942	952
1934	25.15	22.37	931	942
1935	25.11	22.32	924	931
1936	25.06	22.27	928	929
1937	25.02	22.24	922	918
1938	24.97	22.19	955	936

Source: Authors' calculations.

but a real description of each cohort. Consequently, the sum of first marriage frequencies by age cannot be more than 1,000. As with the nuptiality tables, the first marriage frequencies of these cohorts illustrate the prevalence and timing of first marriages for those born before the Second World War. Table 10 summarizes these frequencies.

Canadians born before the First World War tended to marry late, and many did not marry at all – more than one-tenth remained single, at least until age 50. In almost all cohorts, the mean age at first marriage was over 25 for women and over 28 for men. A detailed analysis of marriages by age for these cohorts showed that the distribution was strongly affected by the economic difficulties of the 1930s, depending upon the ages of persons at the beginning of the crisis.<sup>23</sup> These cohorts had overall marriage rates comparable to cohorts at the turn of the century largely because the economic crisis of the 1930s delayed or prevented many marriages. This was shown in the cross-sectional analysis. Chapter 5 presents a more detailed analysis of the behaviour of selected cohorts, to illustrate reaction to political or economic events.

The Second World War affected marriage behaviour differently than the Great Depression. As mentioned in the Section on first marriage frequencies, the prospect of being drafted into the army greatly stimulated the marriage rates of young men in 1940-1942, resulting in a rapid drop in the age of first marriage. In a few cohorts, the mean age at first marriage dropped to 24 for women and 27 for men (Table 10). This trend towards marriage at a younger age was accompanied by an increase in the number of marriages in female cohorts (1913, 1914 and 1915 cohorts). In male cohorts, the number of marriages dropped to the lows registered by the 1917-1918 cohorts. This is probably the effect of excess mortality among never-married young men mobilized after 1942, which meant that the number of married men in the cohorts after the war was artificially high. As a result, first marriage frequencies were lower than they would have been without the war.

As Table 10 shows, cohorts between the two wars had the earliest and most prevalent marriage pattern. The mean age at first marriage dropped from cohort to cohort, reaching 22.25 years in women and 25 in men, a decline of about three years from cohorts affected by the Great Depression. The proportion remaining single at age 50 also dropped, falling to under 5% in cohorts from the beginning of the 1930s. This trend toward earlier and more universal marriage explains the exceptional number of marriages that characterized the post-war period, which reinforced the baby boom.

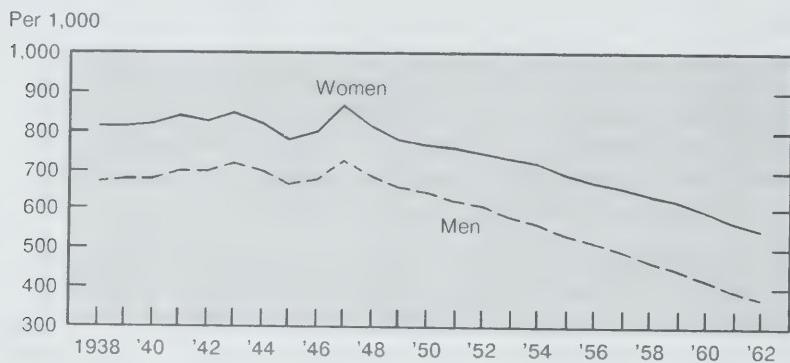
Although they have not all reached age 50, we know that the ten subsequent cohorts also showed a strong tendency to marry. In fact, the sum of first marriage frequencies indicates that over 95% of the 1939-1943 cohorts married before age 45, and over 92% of the 1944-1948 cohorts were married by age 40. This is not surprising because all of these cohorts were already 25 or older when the contemporary marriage plight began.

Because the more recent cohorts have such a short history, we are unable to estimate the first marriages that will eventually take place among them. On

<sup>23</sup> Dumas, J. (1987). Op. cit.

Figure 4

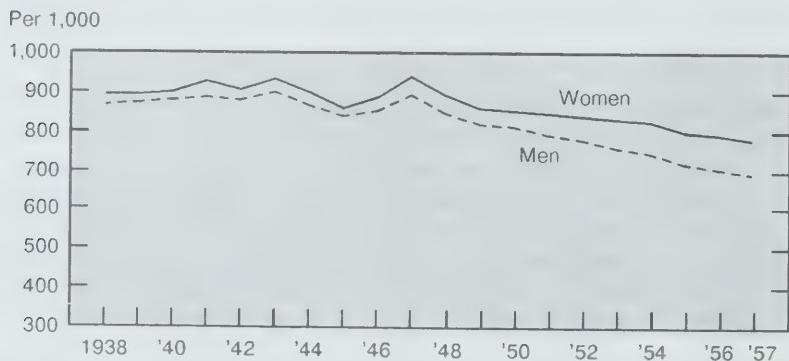
**Cumulated Marriage Rate Frequencies at Age 26, by Sex,  
Canada, 1938-1962**



Source: *Table III.*

Figure 5

**Cumulated Marriage Rate Frequencies at Age 31, by Sex,  
Canada, 1938-1957**



Source: *Table III.*

the other hand, by adding first marriage frequencies for these cohorts, we can see that they no longer tend to marry as young as their predecessors. Figure 4 shows this delay in marriages before their 26th birthday; three-quarters of all women born in the 1940s married before their 26th birthday. For the cohorts of 1962-1963, this proportion drops to less than half. For men, the proportion drops even more rapidly – from six in ten for the 1940s cohorts to under three in ten for the 1963 cohort. Figure 5 shows that this trend is not compensated

for before age 31, at least for the cohorts that have reached this age. In the latest cohorts, the proportions married at 31 are close to those observed at 26 in the 1940s cohort. This trend towards late and less prevalent marriage is not simply a return to the past: marriage is no longer viewed as a prerequisite to living together.

### The Decline in Marriage Prior to Cohabitation

The previous analyses have emphasized the major decline in first marriage rates over the past fifteen years. This "marriage plight" is not unique to Canada; many Western industrialized countries have been affected. Table 11 shows the total first marriage rates for several European countries. These rates indicate the crisis has spread like an epidemic, with its origin in Sweden. There, the total first marriage rate has declined drastically since the second half of the 1960s, dropping to 624 per 1,000 women in 1970. The crisis rapidly spread to Denmark, then to other Scandinavian and Germanic countries. England and France were affected slightly later, while the Eastern European countries, except the German Democratic Republic, remained unaffected. Born in Sweden more than 20 years ago, the current marriage plight has spread to all Western countries.

In Canada, the marriage crisis has affected the provinces to varying degrees. Ontario and Quebec, the two most populous provinces, differ strikingly: in 1988, the total marriage rate for never-married women was 488 per 1,000 in Quebec and 761 per 1,000 in Ontario.<sup>24</sup> In the same year, rates for the other provinces ranged from 634 for Newfoundland to 756 for British Columbia.

TABLE 11. Total First Marriage Rate (per 1,000) for Females in Selected European Countries, 1965, 1970, 1980, 1985, and 1986

	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1986
England-Wales	1,000	1,040	876	761	669	..
Austria	995	913	751	674	598	608
Denmark	986	815	667	533	572	598
Finland	930	939	702	671	..	..
France	993	919	858	706	540	530
Hungary	978	968	998	894	880	..
Norway	872	956	794	648	571	..
Netherlands	1,130	1,060	831	683	567	..
East Germany	1,050	980	919	812	737	782
West Germany	1,100	974	764	656	598	..
Sweden	956	624	628	525	528	536
Switzerland	897	868	650	659	671	..
Czechoslovakia	893	894	975	884	917	..

Note: For England-Wales, the Netherlands, Norway and Hungary, the data dates from 1984.

Source: I.N.E.D., Programme international d'analyse conjoncturelle.

<sup>24</sup> Dumas, J. (1990) *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada Current Demographic Analysis*, 1990, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 115 p.

TABLE 12. First Marriages by Type and Proportion Ever-married per 1,000,  
Male and Female Cohorts 1946-1951 to 1956-1961, Canada

(1) Age group	(2) Direct marriages during the time spent in the age group	(3) Indirect marriages during the time spent in the age group	(4) Sum of (2) and (3)	(5) Cumulated first marriages at the beginning of age group	(6) Proportion married per 1,000 at the beginning of age group
Female cohorts					
1946-1951: 13-19	212	6	218	-	-
20-24	414	30	444	218	234
25-29	105	24	129	662	711
30-34	..	..	..	791	850
1951-1956: 13-19	257	17	274	-	-
20-24	318	65	383	272	276
25-29	..	..	..	655	665
1956-1961: 13-19	168	30	198	-	-
20-24	..	..	..	198	185
Male cohorts					
1946-1951: 13-19	68	-	68	-	-
20-24	415	25	440	68	73
25-29	170	58	228	508	543
30-34	..	..	..	736	787
1951-1956: 13-19	66	7	73	-	-
20-24	342	73	415	73	77
25-29	..	..	..	488	515
1956-1961: 13-19	36	18	54	-	-
20-24	..	..	..	54	49

Source: Microdata from the 1984 Family Survey, Statistics Canada, 1984.

Vital statistics give accurate assessments of the decline in first marriages, but they fail to explain other aspects of the marriage plight. Thus vital statistics are supplemented with sample surveys of the adult population. Two Statistics Canada surveys are particularly important: the 1984 Retrospective Family Survey and the 1990 Survey on Family and Friends. These surveys revealed a major decline in direct marriages – that is, marriages prior to cohabitation.

Table 12 is a partial summary of the 1984 survey results. It shows direct and indirect (preceded by cohabitation) first marriages for various age groups born between June 1, 1946 and May 31, 1961. Five-year groupings were used to illustrate certain changes. These figures show that the proportion already married at a given age decreases from the older to the younger cohorts. Furthermore, the proportion of indirect marriages at a given age increases from one group of cohorts to the next. This proportion is low for age groups that include marriages celebrated before June 1, 1976. On the other hand, for women, it is 15% to 20% for age groups including marriages celebrated between June 1, 1976 and May 31, 1981. The proportions are about the same for marriages between those aged 20 and 25 in the male cohorts of 1951-1956. All this confirms that, since the beginning of the crisis, the decline in first marriages among young people has been accompanied by an increase in premarital cohabitation.

Based on preliminary results from the 1990 survey, Table 13 illustrates the recent upsurge of premarital cohabitation. Among married women aged 30 and less at the time of the survey, four out of ten had lived with their husbands before marriage, compared to one in ten among those aged 40 to 49. The younger women were unlikely to be in second marriages: hence four out of ten is a reasonable estimate of the frequency of indirect first marriages in recent years. As can be deduced from Table 12, this rate has more than doubled over the past ten years: clearly marriage is no longer the founding act of the union that makes it public.

**TABLE 13. Proportion of Married Individuals who Cohabitated Prior to Marriage, by Sex and Age, Canada, 1990**

Age group	Females			Males		
	Currently married	Who cohabitated prior to marriage		Currently married	Who cohabitated prior to marriage	
		Number	%		Number	%
20-24	195	84	43	86	..	..
25-29	638	262	41	514	151	29
30-34	787	240	31	670	206	31
35-39	742	192	26	752	198	26
40-44	729	75	10	727	105	14
45-49	526	56	11	568	82	14

Source: General Social Survey, 1990.

## Conclusion

After three decades of high popularity for marriage, the 1970s and 1980s were marked by a spectacular drop in first marriage rates. First marriages became less prevalent, and took place increasingly late in life. And increasingly, marriages confirmed existing unions rather than creating new ones. These quantitative and qualitative changes in marriage behaviour have been associated with the increase of cohabitation, which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

As seen in Table 14, despite these changes, the majority of young Canadians are still marrying – but later than their elders did. Canadians in their 30s illustrate this particularly well. This change in the age of marriage for single and divorced persons will be discussed further in Chapter 5. A very high proportion of the old members of this 30 year-old group are already married; likely no more than 10% of cohorts born in the first half of the 1950s will remain never-married at age 50. A high proportion of cohorts born in the second half of the 1950s are also likely to eventually marry; close to 80% of women in these cohorts were married before the age of 32.5, as were two-thirds of the men. The fate of the later cohorts is harder to predict because marriages are taking place later, especially among men. Still, almost two-thirds of women born during the first half of the 1960s had married before 1990. Thus it is clear that only small minority of the baby boom cohorts will never marry.

TABLE 14. Proportion Ever-married by Age and Sex, Canada, 1990

Age group	Females			Males		
	Number ever-married	Number, all marital statuses	% ever-married	Number ever-married	Number, all marital statuses	% ever-married
15-19	..	901	..	..	948	..
20-24	214	983	22	89	1,007	9
25-29	735	1,184	62	557	1,176	47
30-34	932	1,184	79	760	1,162	65
35-39	935	1,080	87	892	1,059	84
40-44	894	976	92	865	966	90
45-49	727	764	95	701	759	92
50-54	599	626	96	568	619	92
55-59	580	607	96	579	602	96
60-64	566	587	96	510	546	93

Source: General Social Survey, Statistics Canada.

## Chapter 3

### REMARRIAGE SINCE 1921

From the early 1920s to the end of the 1960s, remarriage was only a minor factor in overall marriage rates. As the divorce rate rose, and especially since 1969, the size of the population able to remarry increased dramatically while the mean age fell. Accordingly, by the end of the 1980s, one-third of all marriages were remarriages for at least one of the spouses. Yet, marriage rates for widowed and divorced persons have fallen dramatically during the last 20 years. These facts will be examined in this chapter.

#### The Marriage Pool

For a person to remarry, the previous marriage must have been terminated. Therefore, only widowed and divorced persons can remarry according to Canadian law. Since re-entry into the marriageable population or "marriage pool" occurs through either widowhood or divorce, each year a new "cohort" of persons re-enters the marriage pool because of these events. As demonstrated in previous studies – K.G. Basavarajappa<sup>25</sup> and B.W. Robinson and W.W. McVey<sup>26</sup> – cohorts after 1921 exhibit distinct characteristics when they are initially separated into widowed and divorced persons, men and women, and young and old. Variations in the composition of cohorts are linked to the way marriages end. Those variations are all the more interesting since remarriage frequently depends upon sex, age and former marital status. For this reason, it is useful to summarize trends in marriage dissolution since the end of the First World War.

Figure 6 and Table IV use census figures to determine the rates of marriage dissolution since 1921. The rates show the average annual figures for divorces and deaths of married or separated persons related to marriages still legally valid when the census was taken. The estimated number of valid marriages was derived from the larger of the two following groups: the number of married and separated men or the number of married and separated women. The sizes of these two groups matched very closely for all censuses. The male group was larger until 1961 and the smallest thereafter. In 1981 and 1986, the number of women living common law was subtracted from the group, since most were either never-married, divorced or widowed. For the 1981 and 1986 censuses, Statistics Canada classified as "married" the individuals engaged in a common-law union.

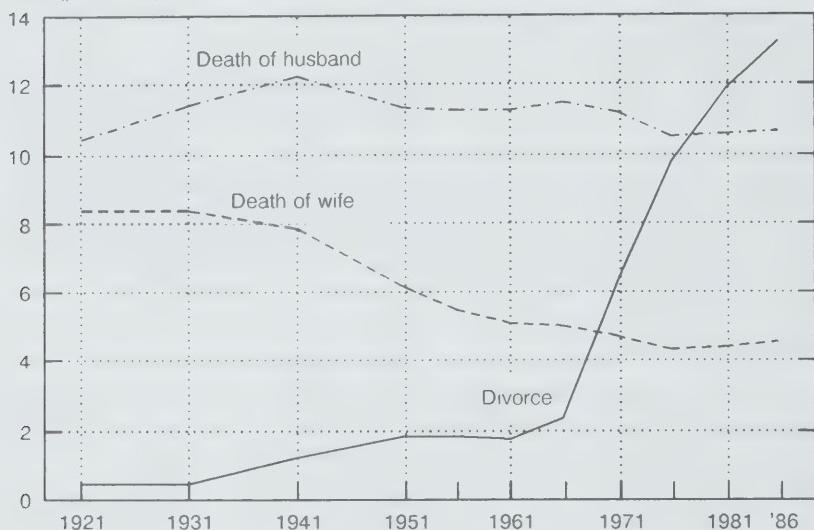
<sup>25</sup> Basavarajappa, K.G. (1978) *Marital Status and Nuptiality in Canada* (1971 Census, Profile Studies), Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 129 p. (Catalogue No. 99-704).

<sup>26</sup> Robinson, B.W. et McVey Jr., W.W. (1985) "The relative contributions of death and divorce to marital dissolution in Canada and the United States", *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, XVI(1), pp. 93-109.

Figure 6

**Marriage Dissolution Due to Death or Divorce, Canada, 1921-1987**

Rate (per 1,000)



Source: *Table IV.*

Since women generally live longer than men and usually marry men older than themselves, they tend to outlive their husbands. Increasingly during the twentieth century, mortality for women has decreased faster than for men.<sup>27</sup> As a result,

<sup>27</sup> For a couple formed in 1931, between a 26 year-old man and a 23 year-old woman, the probability of entering widowhood after 10 years, and even after 20 years, because of the prevailing mortality rates, was about the same for the man or the woman. After 30 years of marriage the probability of entering widowhood was 17% higher among women, and 36% higher after 40 years of marriage.

Around 1980, the risks differed greatly. At all marriage durations, both men and women incurred a lower risk of entering widowhood. However, after 10 or 20 years of marriage, the risk of the woman entering widowhood was 2.5 times greater than the man's. After 30 years of marriage, the risk was 3 times greater for the woman.

**Probability of widowhood excluding Other Causes of Marriage Dissolution, for Unions Concluded at the Mean Age of Marriage (26 years old for men, 23 years old for women), Canada, 1931 and 1981**

Duration of marriage	Women (in %)		Men (in %)	
	1931	1981	1931	1981
10	3.3	1.4	3.6	0.5
20	7.6	3.7	7.6	1.5
30	14.3	9.7	12.2	3.9
40	24.1	22.2	17.7	7.9

compared with men, women are much less likely to die while still married. This explains why the crude mortality rate of husbands remained relatively stable from 1931 to 1971, while that of wives decreased approximately by half. This holds true even though mortality rates for the two sexes have evolved similarly since 1971. It underlines that the similarity in the age structure of both populations (men and women) has become the most important factor. Notably, a slight rise in mortality rates for husbands and wives since 1976 occurred because of the increasing age of the two married populations, attributable to the decline in the marriage rate for singles and an increase in the divorce rate for young couples. Contrary to the past, recent trends have had almost no effect on the distribution by sex of the newly widowed. In the 1920s, there were eight newly widowed men for every ten newly widowed women. In the past 20 years, this number has decreased to four men for every ten women.

The divorce rate, very low before the Second World War, and slightly higher during the 1950s and 1960s, began to climb more rapidly after a new Divorce Act was adopted in 1968. By virtue of this Act, divorce became accessible in all provinces, and marriage breakdown became grounds for separation. As soon as the Act was passed, divorces became more numerous than deaths among married women. Ten years later, the number of divorces also exceeded the number of deaths for married men. From the end of the 1960s to the middle of the 1980s, the divorce rate increased fivefold. Consequently, the size of the annual cohorts of persons re-entering the marriage pool grew considerably: the annual number of divorcees increased from over 22,000 in 1968 to more than 100,000 beginning in 1975.

Figure 7 shows how the divorce rate affects marriage dissolution and the population able to re-enter the marriage pool. The data are extracted from Table IV, where readers will also find the corresponding figures for years prior

Figure 7

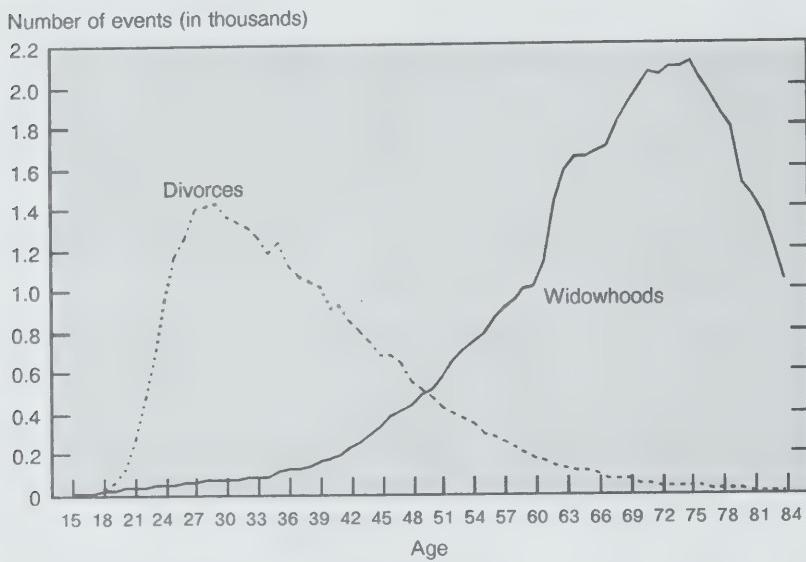
**Number of Divorces per 100 Marriage Dissolutions, and Proportion Divorced per 100 Remarriageable Individuals, Canada, 1951-1986**



Source: Table IV.

Figure 8

**Widowhood and Divorces based on the Nuptiality Table, by Age within a Fictitious Female Cohort, Canada, 1980-1982**



Source: *Table V.*

to 1950-1952. While divorce accounted for only 2% of marriage dissolutions between the two world wars, it represented 9% to 12% during the 1950s and 1960s. Its share climbed to 28% in 1970-1972, and reached 47% in the mid-1980s. Thus only during the last decades did divorce become a major cause of marriage dissolution, rapidly becoming nearly as important a factor as death.

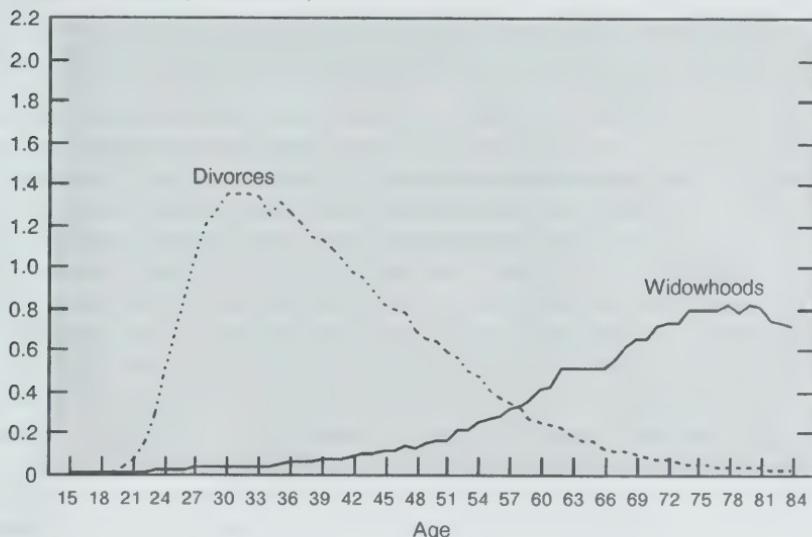
The death of a spouse causes the second spouse to join the remarriageable pool. It can therefore be said that death helps create new cohorts of remarriagable persons. Divorce produces two remarriageables, making its contribution towards increasing the marriage pool even more important. Insignificant during the period between the two world wars and still modest during the 1950s and 1960s, this contribution exceeded that of widowhood by the mid-1970s, and reached nearly two-thirds in the 1980s. The cohorts formerly composed almost exclusively of widowers and widows were superseded by cohorts of mostly divorced men and women.

This change in the composition of the marriage pool is even more important since it was accompanied by a radical change in age distribution. Although the change in the marriage pool's age distribution is a well-known fact, it is difficult

Figure 9

**Widowhood and Divorces based on the Nuptiality Table, by Age within a Fictitious Male Cohort, Canada, 1980-1982**

Number of events (in thousands)



Source: Table V.

to quantify because the annual statistics on marital status do not measure the ages of widowed persons. Lacking this information, compiled statistics on divorce and widowhood – within the cohorts whose history would have been conform with the marriage rate, divorce rate and mortality of Canadian men and women in 1980-1982<sup>28</sup> can illustrate the change in age distribution. The model of multiple decrement nuptiality tables indicates for each age the number of events (marriages, divorces and deaths) which occur to a fictitious cohort of 100,000 men and women from their birth to the age they are extinct (Figures 8 and 9).

Figures 8 and 9 also illustrate broad age differences between divorce and widowhood. Divorce occurs at younger ages: the mode is the late 20s for women, and early 30s for men. Widowhood, in contrast, occurs later in life: the mode is over age 70 for both men and women. Since cohorts re-entering the marriage pool, formed during the last 15 years, include more divorcees than widowed persons, it is likely that young persons are more prevalent than the elderly within those cohorts. This is distinctive from former cohorts.

<sup>28</sup> Adams, O.B. et Nagnur, D.N. (1988) *Marriage, Divorce and Mortality: A Life Table Analysis for Canada, 1980-1982*, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 100 p. (Catalogue No. 84-536E).

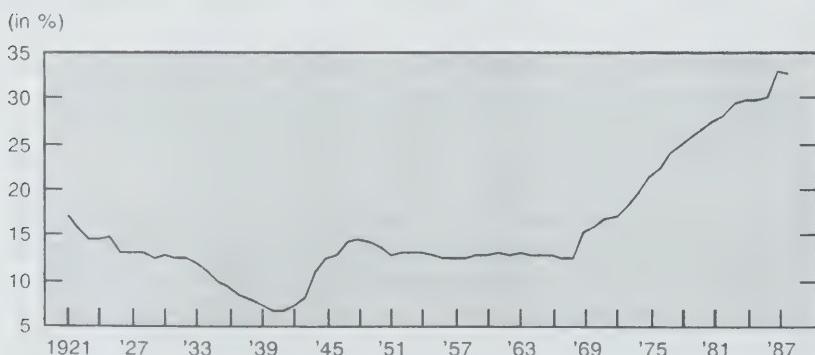
## Remarriage Contribution and Share

Determining remarriage's role in constituting new unions can be measured by looking at the marriages where at least one spouse is remarrying. Marriages during a year are classified in two separate groups: first marriages for both spouses, and marriages involving at least one widowed or divorced person. Figure 10 and Table VI show the sizes of these two marriage categories for the years following 1920. Marriages in Quebec were counted only from 1926, and those in Newfoundland from 1949.

Until the end of the 1960s, most marriages were first marriages for both partners; other marriages accounted for only 12% to 13%. After each world war, remarriage increased slightly, but the phenomenon lasted only a few years, just long enough to lower the incremental widowhood and divorces ensuing from the war. On the other hand, the contribution of remarriage declined when first marriages among singles increased during the second half of the 1930s, and dropped even more at the onset of the Second World War, when first marriages among singles boomed. Table VI shows that the number of remarriages progressed during this period, but at a much slower pace than marriages among singles. Deaths were not numerous enough to create a large number of widows and widowers, therefore the proportion of remarriages was lower. However, this temporary decline in marriages may well have been exaggerated by a deficiency in classifying newly married Ontarians during that period.<sup>29</sup> The weak contribution of remarriage during 1921-1961 resulted because most of those eligible to a new union were widowers and widows probably too old to marry.

Figure 10

### Annual Proportion of Marriages in Which at Least One Spouse was Previously Married, Canada, 1921-1988



Source: Table VI.

<sup>29</sup> Dumas, J. (1985) "Mariages et remariages au Canada", *Cahiers québécois de démographie*, 14(2), pp. 209-229.

The portion of remarriages became significant and continuous only during the last two decades. During this period, many men and women re-entered the marriage pool after divorcing at an age when both the desire to contract a new union and the probability of finding a new partner were still very high. This continuous influx of many young new singles triggered a steep annual increase in marriages where at least one spouse was remarrying (Table VI). Yet annual first marriages between singles plunged after 1972 (see Chapter 5), partly because of the increased number of singles marrying a divorced person, but also, because the marriage of singles declined (Table 15). The combined effects of the decline in first marriages among young singles and the rise in divorce resulted in remarriage having a larger part to play. Consequently, about one-third of all marriages registered in 1987 and 1988 were in fact remarriages for at least one of the spouses.

**TABLE 15. Distribution of Newly Married Persons by Previous Marital Status, Canada, 1928 to 1988**

Year	Males				Females			
	Single	Widower	Divorced	Total	Single	Widow	Divorced	Total
1928	67,157	6,375	749	74,311	69,085	4,487	739	74,311
%	90.4	8.6	1.0	100.0	93.0	6.0	1.0	100.0
1933	58,210	5,001	654	63,865	59,988	3,271	606	63,865
%	91.1	7.8	1.0	100.0	93.9	5.1	0.9	100.0
1938	83,345	4,206	887	88,438	84,876	2,773	789	88,438
%	94.2	4.8	1.0	100.0	96.0	3.1	0.9	100.0
1943	104,652	4,849	1,436	110,937	105,911	3,606	1,420	110,937
%	94.3	4.4	1.3	100.0	95.5	3.3	1.3	100.0
1948	111,418	6,520	5,376	123,314	112,315	6,282	4,717	123,314
%	90.4	5.3	4.4	100.0	91.1	5.1	3.8	100.0
1953	119,683	6,411	4,743	130,837	119,722	6,565	4,550	130,837
%	91.5	4.9	3.6	100.0	91.5	5.0	3.5	100.0
1958	120,957	5,696	4,872	131,525	120,312	6,228	4,985	131,525
%	92.0	4.3	3.7	100.0	91.5	4.7	3.8	100.0
1963	119,884	5,771	5,456	131,111	119,235	6,502	5,374	131,111
%	91.4	4.4	4.2	100.0	90.9	5.0	4.1	100.0
1968	157,309	6,352	8,105	171,766	156,783	7,472	7,511	171,766
%	91.6	3.7	4.7	100.0	91.3	4.4	4.4	100.0
1973	173,355	6,838	18,871	199,064	174,135	7,715	17,214	199,064
%	87.1	3.4	9.5	100.0	87.5	3.9	8.6	100.0
1978	151,884	5,926	27,713	185,523	154,016	6,576	24,931	185,523
%	81.9	3.2	14.9	100.0	83.0	3.5	13.4	100.0
1983	144,960	5,232	34,483	184,675	147,968	5,310	31,397	184,675
%	78.5	2.8	18.7	100.0	80.1	2.9	17.0	100.0
1988	142,956	5,372	39,400	187,728	143,943	5,709	38,076	187,728
%	76.2	2.9	21.0	100.0	76.7	3.0	20.3	100.0

Source: Vital Statistics.

Table 15 shows the distribution, for selected years, of the newly married for both sexes according to their former marital status. The portion of marriages attributable to remarriage during a year is obtained by adding the proportions of widowed and divorced persons for both sexes. In general, the part attributable to remarriage is slightly higher for men than for women, and while this phenomenon is declining, the trend is consistent over the years. Until the late 1960s, most new marriages occurred between never-married singles (90%), but this changed by the end of the 1980s. In fact, one of every four men and women who married in 1988 had been previously married (24%).

### Marriage Rates of Widowed and Divorced Persons

Annual vital statistics on marital status provide little information about those who remarry. Although these figures give the age, sex and previous marital status for those who remarry for a period of over 50 years, they do not indicate how long they had been widowed or divorced. It is therefore impossible to calculate the remarriage frequency within the cohort of remarriageable persons. The choice of marriage indicators for widowed or divorced persons is also limited.

TABLE 16. Marriage Rates for Widowers and Widows by Age,  
Canada, 1940-1942 to 1985-1987 (per 1,000)

Age group	1940-1942	1950-1952	1955-1957	1960-1962	1965-1967	1970-1972	1975-1977	1980-1982	1985-1987
Widowers									
20-24	165.3	221.7	197.1	133.0	121.4	33.1	60.1	42.5	38.5
25-29	176.8	248.9	224.7	243.6	243.0	86.7	176.9	166.0	120.6
30-34	159.2	234.2	210.5	184.2	206.4	111.9	185.3	122.7	113.5
35-39	126.7	176.7	148.3	148.1	132.8	115.9	141.2	101.3	81.0
40-44	84.3	133.0	112.4	77.5	110.9	97.6	104.1	76.9	75.0
45-49	59.0	100.8	93.5	87.7	95.8	89.7	82.6	67.5	63.9
50-54	43.1	73.7	69.1	64.1	75.2	88.9	72.0	56.9	53.4
55-59	32.0	57.6	54.3	49.5	56.4	72.7	62.9	49.8	43.3
Widows									
20-24	109.0	203.3	179.9	189.4	182.0	85.5	110.4	75.1	58.3
25-29	92.0	167.2	150.4	136.9	134.6	95.8	108.2	80.7	75.9
30-34	68.9	110.9	96.8	94.6	84.9	74.8	71.2	52.6	53.4
35-39	44.1	75.3	63.8	61.0	48.9	49.1	46.6	36.3	37.5
40-44	30.5	50.1	44.2	42.8	37.9	40.6	34.2	27.5	26.9
45-49	19.8	37.2	32.7	29.9	28.7	33.4	26.4	19.3	21.7
50-54	12.7	21.6	21.6	21.0	20.9	24.7	18.7	13.6	14.0
55-59	8.3	14.3	13.3	13.9	15.4	15.8	13.8	9.7	9.0

Sources: BASAVARAJAPPA, K.G. (1978). *Marital Status and Marriages in Canada*, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, pp. 119-120, (Catalogue No. 99-704). *Marriage and Divorce*, (Vital statistics vol. II), (Catalogue No. 84-205). *Age, Sex and Marital Status*, (1976 Census of Canada). For 1981 and 1986, authors' calculations include common-law unions.

**TABLE 17. Marriage Rate for Divorced Individuals by Sex and Age,  
Canada, 1940-1942 to 1985-1987**

Age group	1940-1942	1950-1952	1955-1957	1960-1962	1965-1967	1970-1972	1975-1977	1980-1982	1985-1987
Divorced males									
20-24	413.3	824.3	927.2	704.4	817.7	306.6	338.1	156.9	170.7
25-29	483.5	924.6	969.6	686.3	883.9	417.5	411.3	193.2	182.3
30-34	411.0	761.0	759.9	516.0	638.5	357.1	367.0	172.3	143.0
35-39	311.8	551.9	494.0	350.7	421.4	262.1	274.3	137.4	107.7
40-44	230.5	344.3	353.9	245.2	275.2	209.9	197.9	104.6	85.5
45-49	153.3	252.6	248.1	173.6	225.0	178.4	154.9	82.1	71.3
50-54	84.4	167.0	168.6	121.4	157.8	145.9	121.9	66.4	56.5
55-59	64.8	131.9	101.8	90.6	97.1	114.5	96.8	52.5	44.0
Divorced females									
20-24	500.8	651.3	726.6	656.6	597.0	360.8	332.7	192.2	208.6
25-29	364.0	506.8	567.7	453.9	417.3	285.5	262.7	162.5	158.6
30-34	264.2	338.3	366.4	293.4	293.3	203.3	174.4	111.5	103.3
35-39	155.9	224.9	226.8	194.7	187.8	148.9	119.7	73.8	66.5
40-44	124.3	156.6	150.3	125.2	135.8	120.4	89.5	57.5	49.5
45-49	82.7	110.8	112.5	85.4	100.6	103.9	74.5	45.1	40.2
50-54	59.4	77.1	74.5	54.6	62.9	77.0	56.6	33.5	28.6
55-59	42.4	55.6	56.6	33.0	42.1	49.0	41.8	24.1	19.1

Sources: BASAVARAJAPPA, K.G. (1978). *Marital Status and Marriages in Canada*, (1971 Census of Canada, Profile Studies), Ottawa, Statistics Canada, pp. 119-120, (Catalogue No. 99-704). *Marriage and Divorce*, (Vital Statistics vol. II), (Catalogue No. 84-205). *Age, Sex and Marital Status*, (1976 Census of Canada). For 1981 and 1986, the number of divorced individuals was estimated by the authors, in order to include common-law unions.

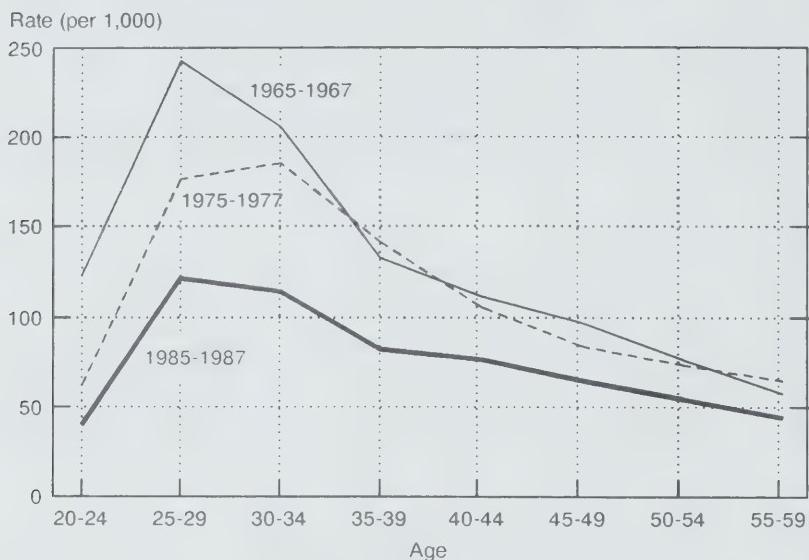
Tables 16 and 17 show marriage rates of widowed and divorced persons younger than 60, for the three-year period around a census year. Rates are provided by sex, marital status and five-year age ranges. In each case, the rates relate the average annual number of remarriages to the group size at the mid-point of the period. The figures for widowed and divorced persons are calculated from census data except for 1981 and 1986. In fact, the figures for these two census periods were modified by the authors to add a number of widowed or divorced persons living common law and classified as married. For this reason, these recalculated rates for the years 1980-1982 and 1985-1987 are lower than those using the uncorrected group size (O.B. Adams and D.N. Nagnur, 1988; H.C. Northcott, 1984). However, rates for 1940-1942 and 1970-1972 are understated because of the deficiency in classifying newly married Ontarians by marital status at the beginning of the Second World War<sup>30</sup> and because of the over-estimation of the number of young widowers and divorced in the 1971 Census.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Dumas, J. (1985) Op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Basavarajappa, K.G. (1978). Op. cit.

Figure 11

**Marriage Rates by Age for Widowers, Canada, 1965-1967,  
1975-1977 and 1985-1987**

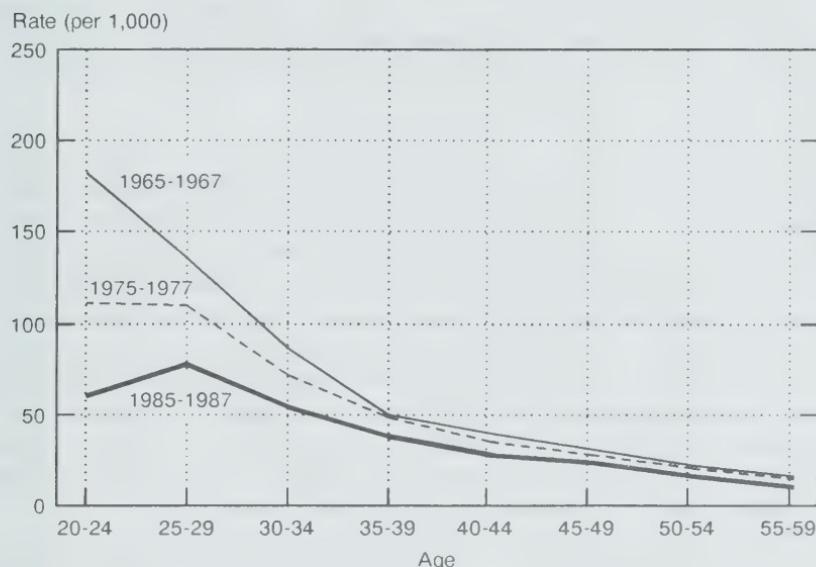


Source: *Table 16.*

The marriage rate of widowers and widows is characterized by major differences according to sex and age (Table 16). From age 20-24 for women and 25-29 for men, marriage rates decline as age increases. Numerous factors contribute to shaping this marriage profile by age. The desire to contract a new union is likely the strongest when widowhood occurs early in life or when the previous marriage has been too short to fulfil initial expectations. Moreover, the feasibility of new unions appears to diminish as age increases, if only because of the shrinking spouse market. In this respect, widows are more disadvantaged than widowers because widows are more numerous, and also, although to a lesser extent, because men tend to choose wives younger than themselves. This is the most likely reason for the lower marriage rate among widows. Yet many changes affecting the marriage rates of widowers and widows have occurred recently that minimize the age and sex differences.

Figure 12

**Marriage Rates by Age for Widows, Canada, 1965-1967,  
1975-1977 and 1985-1987**



Source: *Table 16*.

Overall, the marriage rates of widowers and widows have evolved similarly to those of never-married singles. When the questionable data for 1940-1942 and 1970-1972 are removed from Table 16, one notices that this was true when marriage was popular. Indeed, the rates indicate that widowers and widows were part of the marriage boom during the post-war years. These figures also illustrate that their marriage rates declined in the early 1960s, stabilizing for a few years among women, and recovering moderately among men. Marriage rates for widowed persons paralleled first marriage rates even when marriage was becoming less attractive. Figures 11 and 12 clearly show that the decline in marriage occurred earliest and was greatest among younger persons. The marriage rate among widowers and widows younger than 30 started to decline before 1976, but older ages were significantly affected only after that period. As for first marriages, the drop in marriage rates among widowers and widows slowed markedly during the 1980s. These facts show that the marriage rates of widowed persons still young enough to remarry are not evolving in isolation, but follow major trends of thought.

The same conclusion can be drawn about marriage rates among divorcees, at least until the end of the 1960s (Table 17). The marriage rates of this group and of others in the marriage pool are quite comparable: high rates in the 1950s were followed by lower rates in the early 1960s, except for the youngest age group. These variations were small compared to the fluctuations since the early 1960s. As for others in the marriage pool, the marriage rate of divorcees has declined only over the last two decades.

The annual change in the remarriages of divorced persons is not easy to measure, since it is difficult to estimate the number of divorces within the population during a given year. The total number of divorced persons increases by the number of decrees granted and as divorced immigrants enter Canadian society. It is, however, reduced by those divorcees who die or remarry or who are lost from sight because they emigrate. It is therefore only possible to develop approximate indices. One such index, which is acceptable for Western societies, is calculated as the ratio between the number of remarriages of divorced persons in a year to the sum of divorces granted during the six preceding years. The numerator and denominator are strongly related, and the concept of the measure is acceptable, since most remarriages occur within a short time after marital dissolution (at least for the cases covered by this study).

The evolution of this ratio from 1955 to the present offers interesting information on the attitude of the population concerned. Table 18 shows that until 1968, the ratio was very high and climbing slowly. Since divorce was very rare, remarriage among divorced persons was common. It may even be assumed that, in some cases, the prospective of remarrying was the cause of the divorce. The year 1969 marks a sudden change, and a steep increase in the ratio. This is undoubtedly linked to the changes in the divorce law, which made divorce more accessible in the country as a whole, and possible for the first time ever in the provinces of Quebec and Newfoundland, where tribunals became entitled to apply the federal law. The following years show a constant decrease in the ratio. These two observations deserve further explanation.

The ratio itself, owing to the way in which it is calculated, accounts for the two previous observations. Since every year the denominator increases by the number of newly divorced persons, and similarly decreases by the number of persons divorced six years earlier, a change in divorce accessibility can strongly affect the the index. When, in 1969, the effects of divorce liberalization were felt, the denominator was only slightly affected, but the newly divorced persons (mostly Quebecers) were in large number engaging in the new unions which were now possible because of the change in their marital status. The numerator of the ratio therefore increased much more than the denominator – hence, the ratio became higher. The drop in the ratio which followed may suggest that the divorced persons had a weaker propensity to remarry. But such a bold statement needs to be refined, since it may be simplistic and even erroneous. In fact, the ratio measures increases in the divorced pool, compared to decreases of this

**TABLE 18. Divorces, Total Divorce Rate, Remarriages of Divorced Population and Remarriage "Rate", Canada, 1950-1989**

Year	Number of divorces <sup>2</sup>	Total divorce rate per 10,000 marriages <sup>1</sup>	Number of remarriages <sup>2</sup>		Remarriage "rate" of divorced <sup>2</sup>	
			Males	Females	Males	Females
1950	5,386	..	..	..	..	..
1951	5,270	..	..	..	..	..
1952	5,650	..	..	..	..	..
1953	6,160	..	..	..	..	..
1954	5,923	..	..	..	..	..
1955	6,053	..	4,586	4,681	133	136
1956	6,002	..	4,834	4,779	138	136
1957	6,688	..	5,049	4,936	138	135
1958	6,279	..	4,872	4,985	131	134
1959	6,543	..	5,215	5,185	139	138
1960	6,980	..	5,118	5,117	133	133
1961	6,563	..	5,026	4,935	130	126
1962	6,768	..	5,222	5,048	131	127
1963	7,686	..	5,456	5,374	134	132
1964	8,623	..	6,045	5,644	140	131
1965	8,974	..	6,442	6,179	141	135
1966	10,239	..	7,209	6,663	148	136
1967	11,165	..	7,751	7,144	145	134
1968	11,343	..	8,105	7,511	140	129
1969	26,093	1,367	12,502	11,632	164	152
1970	29,775	1,861	14,371	13,052	147	124
1971	29,685	1,881	15,521	14,351	131	121
1972	32,389	2,004	16,985	15,402	121	110
1973	36,704	2,231	18,871	17,214	114	104
1974	45,019	2,670	21,295	19,064	107	95
1975	50,611	2,932	23,948	21,312	107	95
1976	54,207	3,072	24,931	22,308	100	90
1977	55,370	3,063	26,227	23,555	96	86
1978	57,155	3,108	27,713	24,931	93	83
1979	59,474	3,180	29,220	26,492	91	82
1980	62,019	3,277	31,043	27,993	92	83
1981	67,671	3,529	32,405	29,517	91	83
1982	70,436	3,655	33,334	29,951	90	80
1983	68,567	3,522	34,483	31,397	89	81
1984	65,172	3,306	35,276	31,760	90	81
1985	61,980	3,121	34,780	32,018	88	81
1986	78,160	3,799	32,769	31,902	80	77
1987	90,872	4,314	38,112	36,560	88	84
1988	79,872	3,748	39,400	38,076	89	86
1989	80,716	3,982	38,492	39,370	87	89

<sup>1</sup> DUMAS, J. (1984), *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada 1983*, Current demographic Analysis, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, p. 67.

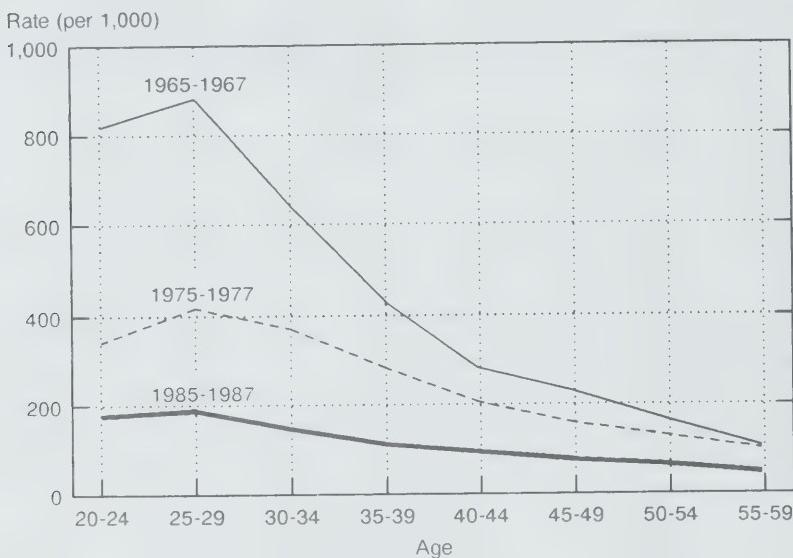
DUMAS, J. (1990), *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada 1990*, Current Demographic Analysis, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, pp. 13 and 16.

<sup>2</sup> 1950-1985: Statistics Canada, Health Division, *Marriages and Divorces*, Catalogue No. 84-205 (annual).

1986-1989: Canadian Center for Health Information, Internal documents.

Figure 13

**Marriage Rates by Age for Divorced Men, Canada, 1965-1967,  
1975-1977 and 1985-1987**



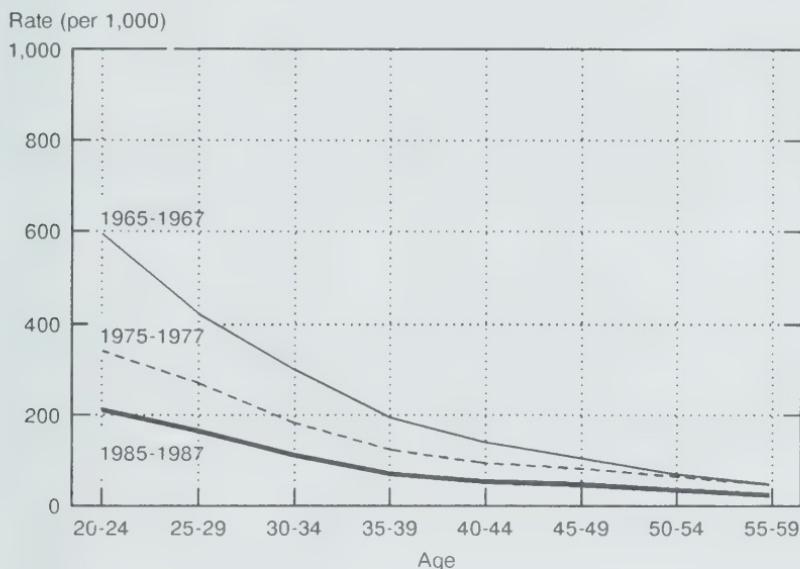
Source: Table 17.

pool through remarriage (counting as nil the effects of death and migration). The gradual reduction of the ratio only indicates that, for each sex, remarriage occurs less often than the entrance of divorced persons in the pool. There could be two explanations for this. First, since divorce is more acceptable socially, possible partners for remarriage may come not only from previously divorced persons, but from all marital statuses. Many single persons have concluded a union with a previously divorced person. Second, the number of common-law unions "reduce" the numerator, while the denominator, to this day, has been steadily increasing as divorces are systematically recorded.

Thus the decline in marriage occurred earliest and was greatest among divorcees. From 1975-1977, in most cases their marriage rates have been markedly lower than ten years earlier regardless of age (Figure 13 and 14). This overall decrease in the marriage rates among divorcees coincided with a striking increase in their numbers. In fact, the number of newly divorced, hovering around 400,000 during 1969 to 1974, reached more than 100,000 a year from 1975. Because they were so numerous and the marriage rates were high among their cohorts, there were more divorcees than singles of the same age, thus limiting their chances of marrying someone who had never married before. Therefore, divorcees may have led rather than accompanied others in the marriage pool in establishing the contemporary marriage plight.

Figure 14

**Marriage Rates by Age for Divorced Women, Canada, 1965-1967,  
1975-1977 and 1985-1987**



Source: Table 17.

Nonetheless, the current marriage rates among divorcees have some similarities with the past. For example, marriage rates vary according to sex and age (Figures 13 and 14). As in the past, rates are lower for older groups at least after age 20-24 for women, and age 25-29 for men. Similarly, beyond age 25, the marriage rate is consistently higher for divorced men than divorced women of the same age. As for widowed persons, these age and sex differences diminish as the remarriage rate falls.

Tables 16 and 17 show the persistent differences in the marriage rates between divorced and widowed persons of the same sex and age. In the past, these differences were very broad: the marriage rate for divorcees greatly exceeded that for widowed persons. Most likely, widowed persons' prospect of remarrying would occur only when the mourning process was complete. For divorcees, the prospect of remarriage was often the reason for separating or divorcing, or the prospect of remarriage occurred after separation while waiting for divorce. Nowadays, the differences in marriage rates between widowed and divorced persons are much smaller, likely because of a higher frequency of common-law living among divorcees. It should be noted that, in the past, remarriage of widows and widowers was frequent and occurred shortly after the death of a spouse (see Chapter 1).

## Conclusion

During the last two decades, remarriage has become a relatively important factor in the formation of new couples. Nearly one-quarter of the men and women who married in recent years were either widowed or divorced, and one-third of all marriages included at least one spouse who was remarrying. The rise in remarriage is partly because of the increase in divorce which expanded the marriage pool considerably and brought down its age. The other reason is the decline in marriage among young singles. Having increased in numbers over the years, those who could remarry have also remarried less and less.

The fall in the marriage rate of widowed and divorced persons does not mean that they have renounced the possibility of remarrying. In fact, a number have opted, either temporarily or permanently, for common-law living in preference to remarriage. The results of Statistics Canada's 1990 Family and Friends survey are most revealing. According to this survey, half of divorcees aged 30-39 and more than one-third of those aged 40-49 were living common-law. The proportions were higher among men than women: 62% versus 41% in the 30-39 age bracket, and 46% versus 28% among those aged 40-49. In conclusion, the liberalization of divorce has not really increased marriage rates.

# **Chapter 4**

## **DIVORCE SINCE 1969**

Since the end of the 1960s, divorce has increased and is now a frequent way of ending a marriage. In addition to some background information, this chapter describes the annual fluctuations of divorce and the evolution of the divorce rates within marriage cohorts. The data used consist of annual vital statistics on divorce.

### **Background**

The voluntary separation of a married couple can later result in either legal separation, annulment or divorce. Legal separation modifies spousal obligations while maintaining matrimonial links. While separation can be revoked at any time, allowing the couple to resume their marriage, neither partner can remarry. Through annulment, spouses regain their former marital status. Annulment is extremely rare and is granted only on very special grounds like non-consummation of marriage. Divorce, on the other hand, does not cancel the existing marriage but dissolves it. Divorcees can remarry, but they are still bound by certain obligations and rights ensuing from the dissolved marriage, such as the payment of alimony or the right to visit children. These legal resolutions to marriage breakdown are optional and are always undertaken after a couple has separated.

Recourse to these judicial arrangements was not always as easy as it is today. Legal separation and annulment are integrated into Canadian civil laws and for centuries, have been accepted by Christian churches, including the Catholic Church. For a long time, these were the only two recourses available in all the provinces. In fact, provincial courts have been empowered to grant divorce only since 1930 in Ontario,<sup>32</sup> since 1945 in Prince Edward Island and since 1968 in Quebec and Newfoundland. Before then, it was possible to submit requests for divorce to the federal Parliament (see Chapter 1). However, such requests were few. In any case, existing laws with their Victorian standards were very restrictive and generally, divorce was granted only with proof of adultery.<sup>33</sup> It was only after the 1968 *Divorce Act* that divorce became truly accessible in all provinces and could be obtained after three or five years with separation as grounds.

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<sup>32</sup> However, it is sanctioned by federal laws.

<sup>33</sup> Pike, R. (1975) "Legal access and the incidence of divorce in Canada: a sociohistorical analysis", *Revue canadienne de sociologie et d'anthropologie - Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 12(2), pp. 115-133.

Prior to 1969, only very basic statistics on divorce are available at the national level. In fact, from 1921 to 1968, the only demographical information published regularly on divorce was the number granted each year. Thus, the only indicators available are the annual number of divorces per 1,000 population, or better, per 1,000 valid marriages. This second indicator was presented in the previous chapter, and some values appeared in Table IV and Figure 6. Results show that the annual number of divorces per 1,000 valid marriages went from 0.42 in 1921 to 2.32 in 1965-1967, rather low compared with the 13.25 recorded for 1985-1987. A lack of data regarding *de facto* and *de jure* separations,<sup>34</sup> and for divorces granted in the United States or Mexico, makes it impossible to measure the full magnitude of the divorce rate and the separation rate among Canadian couples.

The 1968 Act has made divorce more accessible, and it has also made it a more measurable event. Surveying spousal and marriage characteristics has helped establish annual statistics far richer than previously available.<sup>35</sup> Since 1969, the annual number of divorces is reported according to the age of the newly divorced, their matrimonial status at the time of marriage, the duration of their marriage, and so on. However, since these are legal statistics, it is useful to review some of their distinctive features before we analyze them.

In principle, an important difference could exist between the number of married couples who separate and those who end up divorcing. In fact, as in the past, couples may well decide to maintain a *de facto* separation, opt for legal separation, or even an annulment. However, *de facto* separation presents several drawbacks and annulments are limited. Also, most lawyers recommend that their clients seek divorce rather than legal separation, since separation often ends in divorce after a few years. Comparing the annual number of divorces with the annual number of marriages, one realizes that alternatives to divorce have not really been popular in the last 15 to 20 years. Accordingly, over the past 20 years, almost all separated couples have ultimately divorced.

Divorce occurs after the physical breakdown of a union. Between the two events are two successive waiting periods: the first, from the separation to the divorce request, the second, from the time the request is filed to when the decree is obtained. The length of these waits depends largely on the minimum separation time prescribed by law and the time required by the judicial process (which may vary among different law courts or over various years).

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<sup>34</sup> Separations are sanctioned under provincial laws.

<sup>35</sup> Although some important information is still missing, such as the date of separation. The place of marriage was recorded for a short period of time, but it is no longer recorded.

## Annual Fluctuations of Divorce

### A Few Facts

The number of divorces granted in Canada increased from 11,000 in 1968 to more than 90,000 in 1987. A small portion of this impressive rise is attributable to the growth in the number of married couples. A much larger portion results from a higher propensity among couples to divorce, and the increasing ease of obtaining a divorce. These two factors explain long-term trends but not sudden annual variations. These variations are more reflective of legislative changes and the pace of judicial activity.

The Act of July 2, 1968, is innovative because it recognizes lasting separation as sufficient grounds for divorce. The Act requires that when the divorce was requested, an abandoned spouse must have been separated for three years and a departing spouse must have been separated for five. Couples already separated at the time of the Act were the first to benefit from this provision. Thus, these couples accounted for the steep increase in the divorces recorded in 1969 and 1970 (see Table 18). On the other hand, for couples not yet separated in July 1968, the first divorces under these new grounds were not granted until July 1971. Consequently, divorces by reason of separation only started appearing during the second quarter of the 1970s. This time-delayed effect of the Act accounts for the rapid increase in divorces recorded from 1972 to 1976.

The impressive growth in divorce since the late 1960s could happen only with a significant expansion in judicial activity. The number of courts empowered to grant divorces had to increase to meet the need. In some places, the overflow resulted in emergency measures so that long-standing cases could be decided. This happened in Montreal in 1981 when specially appointed courts handled a backlog of 3,000 cases. In fact, more than one-third of the 1981 increase in divorce occurred because this backlog was cleared. This example shows that statistics indicating an explosion in divorce in 1981 and 1982 must be interpreted cautiously.

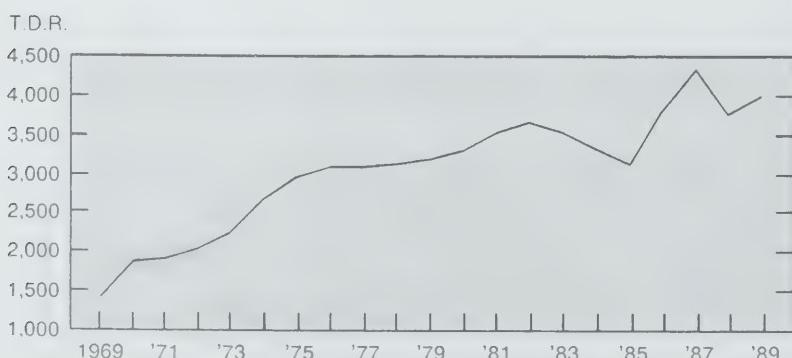
The impressive increase in divorce in 1986 and 1987 is certainly linked to the Act of December 21, 1985, which came into effect in the spring of 1986. This act reduced minimum separation from three or five years *before the request could be made*, to one year *until the court would rule*, thus allowing recently separated persons to petition for divorce. Hence, separated couples could divorce faster than previously and these divorces added to the numbers that would have been recorded if no legislative changes had occurred. Moreover, the decrease in divorces in 1984 and 1985 suggests that some couples, anticipating new legislation, had already postponed their divorce requests to after the Act came into effect. Such a spectacular rise in divorces would never have occurred if the Act had not also simplified the judicial process by substituting no-fault divorce for divorce with cause.

### Comparisons Over Time and Place of Divorce

A logical way to examine divorce is to measure its frequency in relation to length of marriage since divorce indicates that a marriage is "wearing out". This statistic provides the yearly number of divorces according to the longevity or years of marriage, thus relating divorces to the marriages from which they stem. Knowing that in 1981 about half of divorces granted for couples married ten years came from marriages in 1971, and the rest from marriages in 1970, those divorces would be related to the average number of marriages in 1970-71. Extending this calculation to look at marriages lasting up to 26 years provides, for 1981, 26 different ratios which can then be multiplied by 10,000 to obtain divorces per 10,000 marriages. From this calculation, we arrive at a divorce frequency by length of marriage. These annual divorces, related to a single year of marriage, are called divorce frequencies according to the length of marriage.<sup>36</sup> The yearly total of these frequencies is called the total divorce rate. In a population whose marriage cohorts would all have the same divorce rate, in number and by length of marriage, this derived index would equal the proportion of marriages that result in divorce for marriages lasting up to 26 years. The divorce of these 26 years represents 90% of all divorces, and includes almost all remarriageable persons. On the other hand, when divorce rates vary from one cohort to the other, as is generally the case, the total divorce rate value may differ greatly from the average divorce rates among the cohorts divorced for the year observed.

Figure 15

Total Divorce Rate (per 1,000 Marriages), Canada, 1969-1989



Source: Table 18.

<sup>36</sup> Ratio to the corresponding marriage cohort.

This total divorce rate neutralizes the differences in the annual number of marriages on the number of divorces. In fact, this index represents the number of divorces for marriages lasting up to 26 years, relative to the annual number of marriages and reported on 10,000 marriages for the period under study. Thus, its 1981 value of 3,529 represents the number of divorces per 10,000 marriages each year from 1955 to 1980. This feature makes the index very useful for comparisons over time, and between different areas.

The total divorce rates for the years following 1968 are shown in Table VII and carried over in Figure 15. Though the index variations are less pronounced than the annual number of divorces, their evolution is characterized by the same features. The pattern described in the previous section in particular is readily visible in Figure 15: the first increase in divorce due to the immediate and delayed effect of the 1968 Act; then, the temporary explosion in divorce in the early 1980s; and in 1986 and 1987, a new boom after the 1985 Act came into effect. Since 1986, the index has remained above 3,000 divorces per 10,000 marriages. Indications are that it is approaching almost 4,000, a threshold temporarily surpassed in 1987.

TABLE 19. Total Divorce Rate in Selected Countries, 1965 to 1987 (in %)

	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1987
England-Wales	10.7	16.2	32.2	39.3	43.8	41.5
Austria	14.5	18.2	19.7	26.2	30.8	29.5
Belgium	8.2	9.6	16.1	20.8	..	..
Canada	..	18.6	29.3	32.8	31.2	43.1
Denmark	18.2	25.1	36.7	39.3	45.2	45.2
Scotland	5.9	10.3	18.3	25.6	34.1	31.4
Finland	13.7	17.1	25.8	27.3	..	..
France	10.7	12.0	15.6	22.2	30.4	30.8
Hungary	22.7	25.0	27.7	29.4	33.3	35.0
Italy	..	..	3.1	3.2	4.1	6.5
Norway	10.2	13.4	20.7	25.1	32.6	34.8
Netherlands	7.2	11.0	20.0	25.7	34.4	28.6
Poland	..	14.6	15.4	13.6	16.6	..
West Germany	..	..	23.4	22.7	31.2	32.2
East Germany	..	..	28.8	32.3	..	..
Sweden	17.8	23.4	49.9	42.2	45.5	43.1
Switzerland	12.7	15.5	20.9	27.3	28.7	29.7
Czechoslovakia	16.8	21.8	27.3	26.6	30.9	30.2
U.S.S.R.	14.9	26.0	29.0	37.0	..	..

Source: DUMAS, J. (1990), *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada 1990*, Current Demographic Analysis, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, p. 16. MONNIER, A. (1990), "La Conjoncture démographique: l'Europe et les pays développés d'Outre-Mer", *Population*, 45(4-5), p. 930.

Rising divorce rates during the last 20 to 25 years are not particular to Canada (shown in Table 19, which presents divorce rates per 100 annual marriages). Several Western countries witnessed a sharp increase in the divorce rates during the period from 1965 to 1974, followed by a slower progression during the next ten years. As in Canada, this rise in divorce was accompanied by legislative changes that recognized separation as grounds for divorce and shortened the minimum waiting period. Canada, formerly with low divorce rates, has almost caught up to countries with high rates such as England, Denmark or Sweden.

### Age and Marital Status at Marriage

Results presented until now related to all marriages. However, it is interesting to examine the divorce rates within the distinct marriage categories. Some types of marriage are known to be more unstable than others, notably early marriages and remarriages. Results for specific categories related to age and marital status at marriage follow. First, the total divorce rates by age of men and women marrying for the first time appear in Table VIII in the Appendix. Secondly, the divorce rate appears at the beginning of the marriage, by marital status of men and women at marriage, in Table 20.

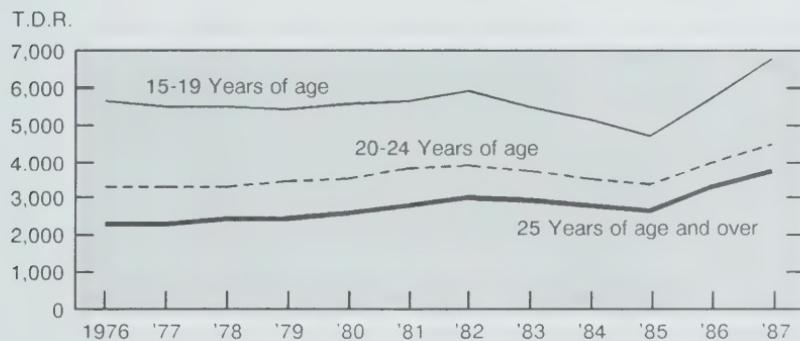
TABLE 20. Duration-specific Divorce Rates Between 0 and 9 Years of Marriage, by Marital Status at Marriage, Canada, 1985 (per 10,000)

Duration	All marital statuses	Divorced female and single male	Divorced female and divorced male	Single female and divorced male	Single female and single male
0	-	-	-	-	-
1	27	38	45	25	24
2	83	107	101	70	81
3	118	141	141	130	114
4	157	185	200	133	149
5	191	216	205	194	189
6	200	237	218	212	198
7	194	236	171	181	198
8	185	236	206	189	166
9	172	209	190	177	171
Total	1,327	1,605	1,477	1,311	1,290

Source: DUMAS, J. (1990), *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada, 1988, Current Demographic Analysis*, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, pp. 45-46. (Catalogue No. 91-209E).

Figure 16

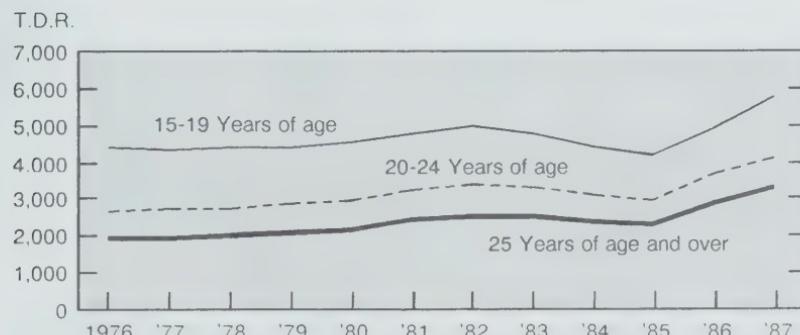
**Total Divorce Rate for First Marriages, by Age at Marriage, Men,  
Canada, 1976-1987 (per 10,000 Marriages)**



Source: *Table VII*.

Figure 17

**Total Divorce Rate for First Marriages, by Age at Marriage,  
Women, Canada, 1976-1987 (per 10,000 Marriages)**



Source: *Table VII*.

The extreme fragility of early marriages is shown very clearly in Figures 16 and 17. These figures illustrate how the total divorce rates from first marriages evolved between 1976 and 1987. During that period, the annual number of divorces for 10,000 first marriages contracted before age 20 remained above 4,000 among women, and exceeded 5,000 among men, except in 1985. Numbers reached record levels in 1987, with 5,700 divorces among women and 1,000 more among men. All compiled indexes confirm that early marriages are much more unstable than those contracted between age 20 and 25. Those marriages are, in turn, less stable than marriages of singles aged 25 or older. For this reason, the current trend toward later marriages could inhibit a rise in the divorce rates. This remains to be examined in further in-depth analysis.

Table 20 was established using figures for divorces granted in 1985 among couples who married in Canada between 1976 and 1985. To calculate the divorce frequency rate, divorces were classified according to year of marriage and several combinations of the spouses' marital statuses at marriage. These divorces were then related to the marriages from which they ensued, thus providing divorce rates per 10,000 marriages. Therefore, Table 20 shows divorces granted in 1985 per 10,000 marriages, in each category, for 1985 (duration 0 years), for 1984 (duration 1 year), for 1983 (duration 2 years), and so on. Also, it provides for each marriage category the total divorce rate for marriages lasting from 0 to 9 years; in other words, a total divorce rate solely reflecting divorce frequencies before the end of the ninth year following the marriage.

The resulting indexes confirm that remarriages of divorcees are more unstable than first marriages. Marriages between divorced women and never-married men are most fragile,<sup>37</sup> followed by marriages between two divorced persons, then by marriages between divorced men and never-married women. But then again, the divorce rate for couples composed of divorced men and never-married women is comparable to that for first marriages of both spouses. The greater fragility of remarriages of divorced women may result because more often than divorced men, women have custody of children from a previous marriage. Results suggest that an increased proportion of remarriages within all marriages has favoured a rise in the divorce rates. A few remarks have to be made in order to correctly interpret this observation. The populations "at risk" of divorce are not the same for marriages as for remarriages. The "remarriageable" population is part of the population married for the first time and is strongly selected by divorce itself. Most likely, the fragility of the union contracted by divorced persons is not characteristic of this type of union, but clearly reflects the instability of the persons who engage in it, as well as their propensity to get married.

<sup>37</sup> In marriages between divorced women and never-married men, the pattern and age gap between the spouses vary greatly compared with other types of marriages (see Chapter 5). Indeed, in 609 of all cases, the wife is older than her spouse.

## Divorce Within Marriage Cohorts

Having dealt with the evolution of divorce rates from year to year, it is useful to examine how the rise in divorce rates relates to the history of the different marriage cohorts. For this purpose, data from the 1984 retrospective survey on family will be used, along with annual statistics on the divorce rate. The first of these data have already been analyzed by T. Burch and A. Madan (1986) and Table IX is excerpted from their publication.<sup>38</sup> The second set of statistics has also been widely presented and analyzed by J. Dumas in the series, "Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada". Table VII is excerpted from the most recent report from that series.<sup>39</sup> The longitudinal approach in this section is interesting in itself and also confirms some indications from the total divorce rates.

The 1984 retrospective survey on family provided information on the marriages of people aged 18 to 64. These people can be classified from the time of their first marriage. Also it is possible to trace those who later divorced or simply separated from their first spouse. Table IX is limited to female cohorts and shows two probabilities by length of marriage. Each show the likelihood of marriage breakdown, the first, related to divorces only, and the second, counting separations as well. The length of marriage is calculated until the separation, not at the time of divorce. Results are illustrated in Figures 18 and 19.

Predictably, divorce rates increase dramatically from older cohorts to more recent ones. The probability of divorce before the first ten years of marriage was 4% for marriages that occurred before 1960, and it rose from 12% among cohorts from the 1960s to 16% among cohorts from the first half of the 1970s (Figure 18). The differences between the cohorts furthest apart are compounded when separations are added to these figures (Figure 19). Indeed, most of these separations were recent and were recorded mainly among the younger cohorts. Insofar as most separations likely resulted in divorce after the survey was conducted, adding those figures certainly boosts the number of marriage breakdowns that would result in divorces. Therefore, one can assert that almost one-quarter of women who married from 1960 to 1969 have experienced an irreversible marriage breakdown before their 20th wedding anniversary. This proportion is certainly much greater among women who married in 1970-1974, since one-fifth of them experienced marriage breakdown before their tenth anniversaries.

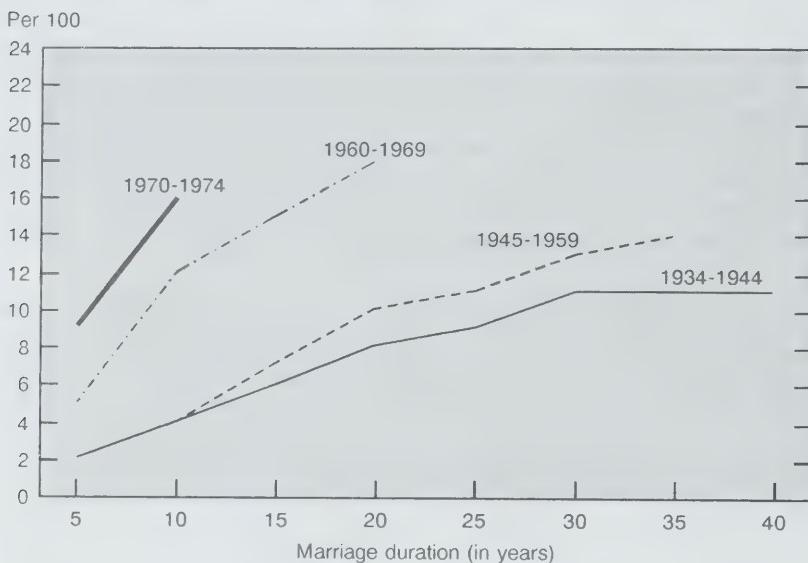
Figure 20 provides, for a few cohorts, the number of divorces according to the length of marriage per 10,000 couples. It includes not only first marriages for women but all marriages. Furthermore, the marriage length is calculated until the time of divorce instead of separation. Data from Table VIII are illustrated in Figure 20.

<sup>38</sup> Burch, T.K. et Madan, A.K. (1986) *Union Formation and Dissolution: Results from the 1984 Family History Survey*, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 35 p. (Catalogue No. 99-963).

<sup>39</sup> It is included in its updated version, which can be found in the appendix.

Figure 18

**Cumulated Probabilities of First Marriage Breakdown by Divorce,  
by Duration of Marriage, Female Cohorts, Canada, 1934-1979**



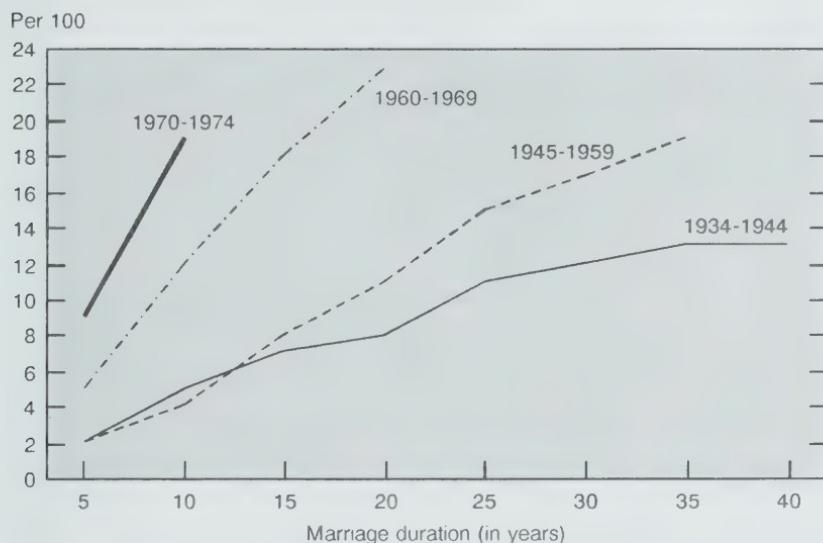
Source: *Table IX.*

The oldest cohorts were from 1969. Data on divorces granted prior to that period have not been recorded. Interestingly, for those cohorts, the total divorce rate reached its highest level only during the mid-1970s, rather than during the first years after the 1968 Act came into effect. This is true regardless of the marriage length under observation. The figures are not reproduced in this study, but this late trend may be because persons not yet separated in 1968 had to wait at least three to five years before they could seek divorce on grounds of separation.

The minimum separation requirement of three or five years also explains why divorces are highest between five and seven years of marriage among cohorts formed after 1968 (Table VII). This modal duration seems relatively short, considering several months between filing the request and the ruling on divorce. This indicates that many couples separate after living together only a very short time.

Figure 19

**Cumulated Probabilities of First Marriage Breakdown by Divorce or Separation, by Duration of Marriage, Female Cohorts, Canada, 1934-1979**



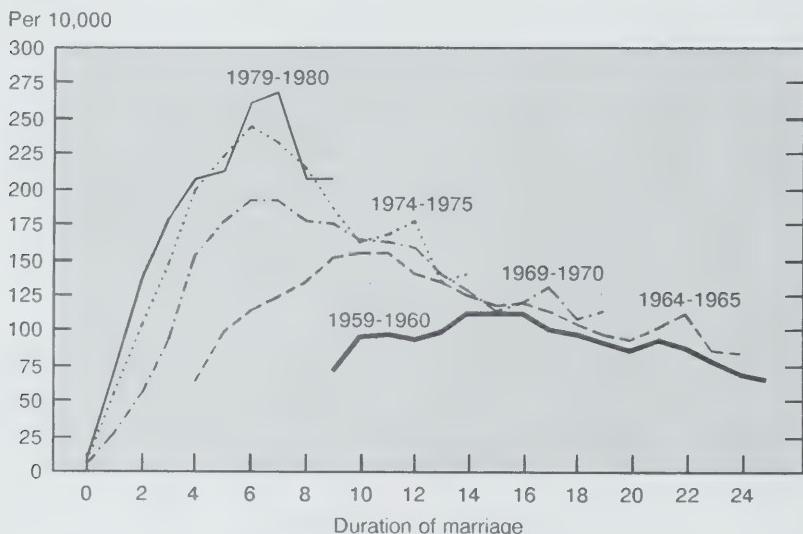
Source: *Table IX.*

Indeed their numbers increase from one cohort to the next. For the cohorts formed after 1985, too recent to be considered here, the modal duration of marriage at the time of divorce should have been shorter, since the required separation period before divorce was reduced to one year by virtue of the new Act.

Figure 20 shows strikingly that the rise in divorce from one cohort to the next mainly occurred during the first years of marriage. Beyond 10 or 12 years of marriage, the number of divorces granted by years married is very comparable from one cohort to the other. According to figures in Table VII, almost one-quarter of couples who married in 1969-1970 divorced before their nineteenth anniversary; 23% of those married in 1974-1975 divorced before their fourteenth anniversary. These results suggest that the proportion of couples divorced prior to 26 years of marriage may exceed 30% among all cohorts formed during the 1970s.

Figure 20

**Cumulated Marriage Rate Frequencies (per 10,000), Canada,  
1959-1960, 1964-1965, 1969-1970, 1974-1975 and 1979-1980  
Cohorts**



Source: *Table VII.*

## Conclusion

Because of the 1968 Act, married couples were no longer compelled to maintain unhappy unions. However, their numbers had been underestimated. The divorce rates within some marriage cohorts suggest, in fact, that about 30% of persons who married during the 1970s would likely divorce before their 26th anniversary. As further evidence, the total divorce rate for the years 1976 to 1985 indicates slightly more than 30 divorces for 100 marriages during the same period. Could it be that the higher levels of these indices, since the 1985 Act came into effect, lead us to expect that about 40% of newly married couples would be affected by divorce? Such a conclusion results only from a follow-up of the existing trends, but discards a possible change in the tempo of the event, a phenomenon which occurs so often in demography. It is possible, as shown modestly by the latest statistics, that unions destined to dissolve are doing so earlier in the lives of the couples. Thus, their proportions may not increase. Table IX shows that the modal value of divorce rates occurs earlier after marriage, as we approach the present. If this kind of change in tempo is not the valid explanation, then Canada is becoming a country with a high divorce rate.

## **Chapter 5**

### **SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS**

Marriage statistics provide information on certain socio-demographic aspects of nuptiality. The first part of this chapter describes seasonal fluctuations of marriages. To some extent, these fluctuations reflect transformations in Canadian society. The second part of the chapter illustrates the effects of these socio-economic events on the marriage rates of a period, and among marriage cohorts. The third and final part regroups data according to the choice of spouse.

#### **Seasonal Fluctuations of Marriage**

In all countries where demographic events are systematically recorded and available, one readily notes that events are not evenly distributed over the year. Deaths or births occur more often during certain periods. These periods may vary according to geography, habits and customs of the country, and may change over time. Such is also the case for marriage. However, while birth and death dates are partly beyond planning, time of marriage, because of the social aspect of the event, is linked to customs, trends or habits that can fluctuate quite rapidly within the same society. In Canada, the period and even the date of marriage have been governed by two major constraints: religious authority and the availability of time. Thus in Canada, like elsewhere in the world, all religions have forbidden marriages during certain periods of the year, or have been reluctant to authorize it.<sup>40</sup> As well, marriage requires a minimum amount of free time for both spouses and for guests or relatives that must sometimes travel from distant locations.

During the few decades observed, these two parameters have evolved: the religious authority declined significantly and individuals' free time increased. More importantly, people's time was distributed differently as lifestyles changed and communications became more rapid. The effect of these two processes on the seasonality of marriage is apparent through recollections of very old people, and has been illuminated statistically by Réjean Lachapelle in 1971.<sup>41</sup> At the time, statistical series were shorter than they are today and some analysis could not be conducted because data processing technology was less advanced. Therefore, the authors have redone this analysis and tried to extend it.

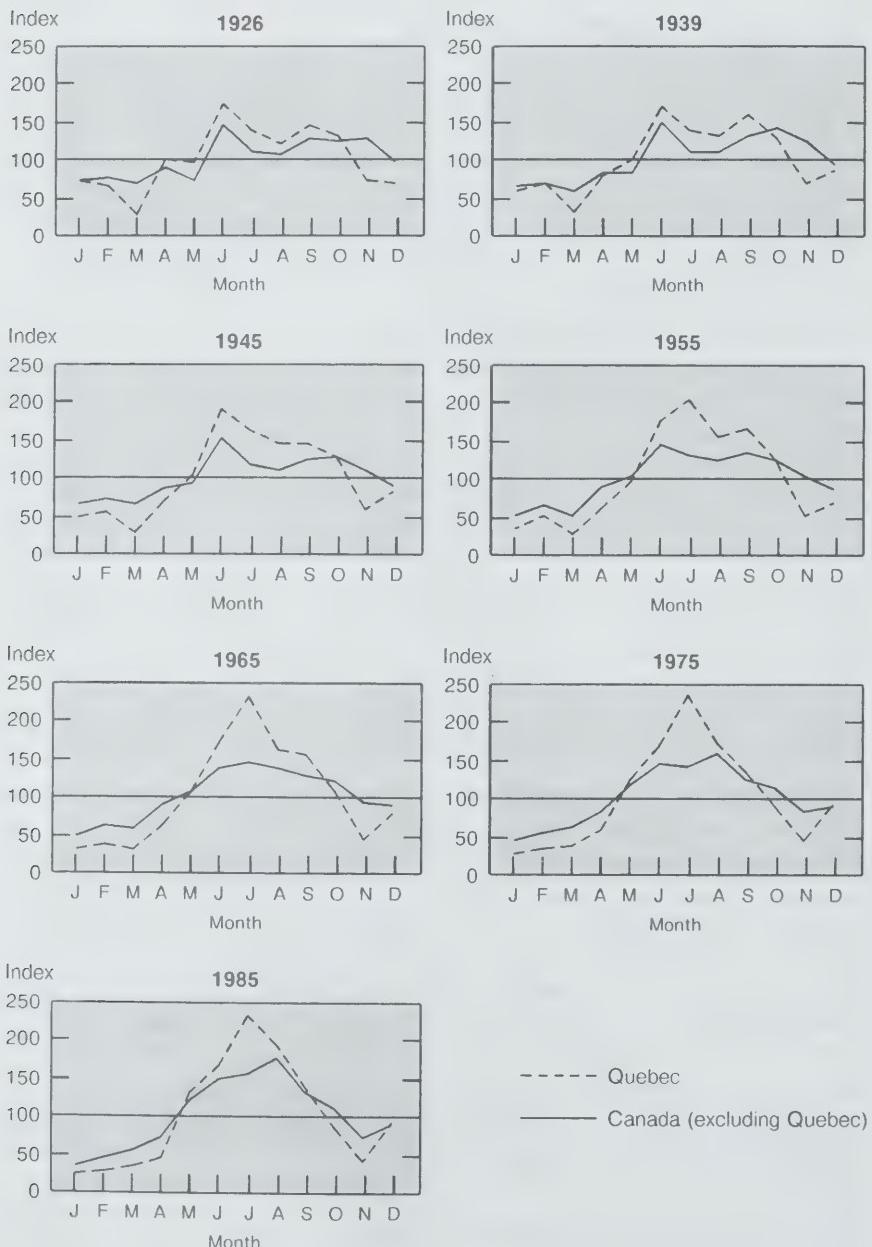
Figure 21 summarizes the fluctuations in marriage distribution by month. Because Quebec is unique for most demographic phenomena, the authors have compared Quebec with the rest of Canada.

<sup>40</sup> The number of days during the year when marriages can be celebrated according to the coptic rite does not exceed 5 months.

<sup>41</sup> Lachapelle, R. op. cit.

Figure 21

**Changes in Marriage Seasonality in Quebec and in Canada  
(excluding Quebec), 1926-1985**



Source: Table X.

Finally, to account for evolution over time, it is customary to choose reference points in such a way that they avoid bias. Since the Second World War has been a social and economic turning point, the end of the war (1945) was chosen as the starting point for ten-year periods up to 1985 which can be included in what we call the present. The period preceding the war is shorter since it only started in 1926 when provincial records in Quebec began. Since the ten-year interval ends in 1936, the period was extended by three years and was called the pre-war years.

### General Analysis

Figure 21 relates the frequency indices for each month of the year. The monthly value of the index is calculated in relation to the average of the study period which is given the value of 100. The twelve annual indices sum up to 1200. Thus, if the index value of a month is 150, it means that the number of marriages of this month is 50% higher than the average. At the opposite, if the index stands at 60, the number of marriages of this month was 40% lower than the average.

The graphs clearly highlight, more so for Quebec than for the rest of Canada, a double peak during the pre-war period and a single peak dominating unequivocally from 1965. The combined effects of the two influences identified earlier (religion and free time) explain the change in distribution. The two-peak curve emphasizes the rural character of a society respectful of religious traditions, where the rhythm of work, mainly agricultural, was dictated by the seasonal cycle. The two peaks occur mainly in June, and at the end of summer (September or October). They precede and follow a drop in July and August. June coincides with the slowdown of activities during the growth of farm products, and September and October coincide with the break after harvesting. April and May, with very few marriages, coincide with the very active period of preparing the soil and sowing. For Quebec, the curve is more accentuated than for the rest of Canada, likely because Quebec was more rural at the time. The greater part of industrial activities were already concentrated in Ontario and its population was more urban. The decrease in the number of marriages in November, more accentuated in Quebec than in other provinces, is probably attributable in part to the lumbering which drew many farmers from villages during winter.

The deep low in March should be attributed to Lent, a period when the Catholic Church disliked celebrating marriages. The effects of Advent, less restrictive on this point, are offset by the absences due to lumbering. Here again, Quebec, which was very Catholic, differs from the rest of Canada. Similar situations in 1926 and 1939 lead one to believe that Canadian society was experiencing a period of stability in customs.

The post-war years, after a sustained growth, confirm the supremacy of summer over winter as the marriage season. The July and August dip in the curve disappears and is now replaced by a peak which has never been so high. Overall,

TABLE 21A. Monthly Marriage Index in Canada (excluding Quebec) 1926-1951  
(Deviations from 100 which are not related to seasonality)

Ash Wednesday	Easter	Year	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Canada (excluding Quebec)
17 February	4 April	1926													110
2 March	17 April	1927													84
22 February	8 April	1928													88
13 March	31 March	1929													89
5 March	20 April	1930													113
18 February	5 April	1931													92
10 February	27 March	1932													
1 March	16 April	1933	112												
14 February	1 April	1934	110												
6 March	21 April	1935													
26 February	12 April	1936													
10 February	28 March	1937													
2 March	17 April	1938													
22 February	9 April	1939													
7 February	24 March	1940													
26 February	13 April	1941													
18 February	5 April	1942													
10 March	25 April	1943													
23 February	9 April	1944													
14 February	1 April	1945													
6 March	21 April	1946													
19 February	6 April	1947													
11 February	28 March	1948													
2 March	17 April	1949													
22 February	9 April	1950													
7 February	25 March	1951													

Values not shown are not significantly different from 100.  
Statistics Canada internal document.

TABLE 21B. Monthly Marriage Index in Quebec, 1926-1951  
(Deviations from 100 which are not related to seasonality)

Ash Wednesday	Easter	Year	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
			Quebec											
17 February	4 April	1926					92							
2 March	17 April	1927	126	108		78								92
22 February	8 April	1928	89	91	115	83	89							
13 February	31 March	1929	106	106	110	91	91	112						
5 March	20 April	1930	88	108	110	91	112	86						
18 February	5 April	1931	109	92	175	86								93
10 February	27 March	1932	137	112	92	90	92							87
1 March	16 April	1933	109	137	112	92								111
14 February	1 April	1934	90	127										119
6 March	21 April	1935	164											108
26 February	12 April	1936	116											
10 February	28 March	1937	77	177	108									
2 March	17 April	1938	92											
22 February	9 April	1939	113	75										
7 February	24 March	1940	64	194	86									
26 February	13 April	1941	112	92										
18 February	5 April	1942	109	130										
10 March	25 April	1943	86	187	66									
23 February	9 April	1944	92	92										
14 February	1 April	1945	90	79										
6 March	21 April	1946	91	139	88									
19 February	6 April	1947	75											
11 February	28 March	1948	81	119										
2 March	17 April	1949	110											
22 February	9 April	1950	69	89										83
7 February	25 March	1951	167	86										92

Values not shown are not significantly different from 100.  
Statistics Canada internal document.

this is easily explained. With industrialization and urbanization, the great majority of people are no longer constrained by farm work cycles. Summer holidays have become standard, and the marriage and honeymoon are planned to coincide with them. Also since the end of the war, Quebecers and other Canadians have increasingly behaved differently. As a whole, other Canadian provinces have retained a higher number of marriages in winter, a slowdown still occurs in July, and more and more, marriages seem to peak in August. This may be interpreted as the last sign of rural life in the West. Over time, the low marriage index in March due to Lent became less apparent and disappeared completely after 1975. The low in November seems to result from the increased number of marriages at the end of the year rather than from observation of Advent, as will be seen.

### Easter's Effect

To simplify, one could say that the result of seasonally adjusting statistical time series is the highlighting of "accidents". In fact, an increase in the frequency of an event can be seasonal. As the frequency of most events is related to the season, some periods a month, for example, systematically show a higher or lower figure. If this seasonal effect is not eliminated "accidents" if any exist, can be offset or their magnitude wrongly situated. Easter as a mobile celebration can be seen as one of these "accidents". In the framework of this study the question is: Is there statistical evidence that when Easter occurs during a given month, the marriage rate for that month increases? Though the answer is negative, it probably does not mean that Easter has no effect but rather that Lent, which precedes Easter, had a historical effect in the opposite direction. Tables 21A and 21B show that indices for February, March and April fluctuate more than those of other months and this is more evident in Quebec than in the rest of Canada.

### Day of Marriage

Like the choice of month, the choice of week day has also been influenced by religious authority and time availability.

In Canada, no comprehensive research has been conducted on the choice of weekday for marriage. The authors have thus evaluated whether a change in habits has occurred, and the nature of the change. Two reference points were chosen: the first is 1933-1934 representing the old period (as this was the height of the economic crisis, typical social behaviours from the period would have been accentuated); the second point of reference is 1987 representing the current period. Because of data availability, a random sample in Newfoundland and Ontario was chosen for the old period. For the modern period, national data were used (Table 22). During the 1930s, the fact that Sunday was rarely chosen – this is still true today – highlights religion's influence; Friday was also rarely chosen. On those days, clergymen were busier than usual with religious

**TABLE 22. Marriages by Day of the Week (Ontario 1933-1934,  
Newfoundland 1934 and Canada 1987)**

		Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Total
Ontario, Nfld.	N. <sup>1</sup>	33	82	74	85	94	43	194	605
	%	5.5	13.6	12.2	14.0	15.5	7.1	32.1	100.0
Canada	N. <sup>2</sup>	6,456	4,322	4,201	4,696	6,437	25,710	130,329	182,151
	%	3.5	2.4	2.3	2.6	3.5	14.1	71.5	100.0

<sup>1</sup> Number from sample.

<sup>2</sup> Total number of marriages.

Source: Samples of Marriage Certificate Registrations for the years 1933 and 1934. Vital Statistics for 1987.

services and Friday was a day when Catholics did not eat meat. Generally, other days of the week were selected in comparable proportions, but there was already a preference for Saturday.

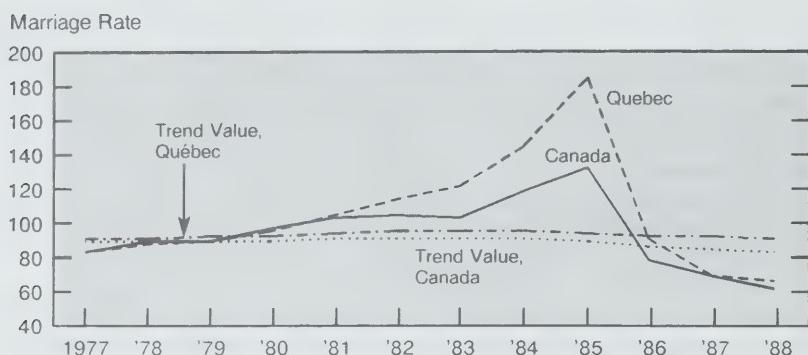
The current period is distributed very differently. Friday is no longer a neglected day – quite the contrary. It has become a preferred day (14% of marriages are now celebrated on Friday). It may be because the weekend begins on Friday evening and it is an appropriate time to leave work and take holidays. As well, the increasing number of civil marriages may spill over to Friday as they cannot all be handled at administrative offices on Saturday (72% of marriages are celebrated on Saturday). Also, marriages on Sunday are rare, thus nine out ten marriages are celebrated over two days of the week.

### Marriages in December

The higher number of marriages in December than in November or January has been attributed to Christmas. Seemingly, among Catholics in particular, the Christmas and New Year's period was chosen for marriage when it had not been possible to marry before Advent. In fact, December's index over time has always been below the annual average but above November's index (Figure 21). However, a reading of the variation not attributable to seasonal factors shows that from 1971 to 1985 (more so in Quebec than in the rest of Canada) the monthly index for December increased sharply. This was followed in 1986 by a sudden return to normal, and December as a marriage month became even less popular in 1987 and 1988. The fluctuation can be explained by a peculiarity in the Canadian tax system. Since the old days, a spousal exemption was granted, by virtue of the Income Tax Act, to a taxfiler who was officially married on December 31. Around the 1980s, persons who were about to marry wanted to take advantage of this provision by marrying before the end of the year. Various reasons such as the desire to reduce tax burdens, better knowledge of the law, complete disappearance of religious influence concerning Advent, and so on.

Figure 22

**Deviation of the December Marriage Rate Index from its Trend,  
Quebec and Canada (excluding Quebec), 1977-1988**



Source: *Table XI.*

But the Act was amended in 1985, and accordingly from 1986 the exemption became proportional to the length of time as a married person during the year. As a result, the marriage index for December reverted to its previous low level and since that year the number of marriages in January and February has increased.

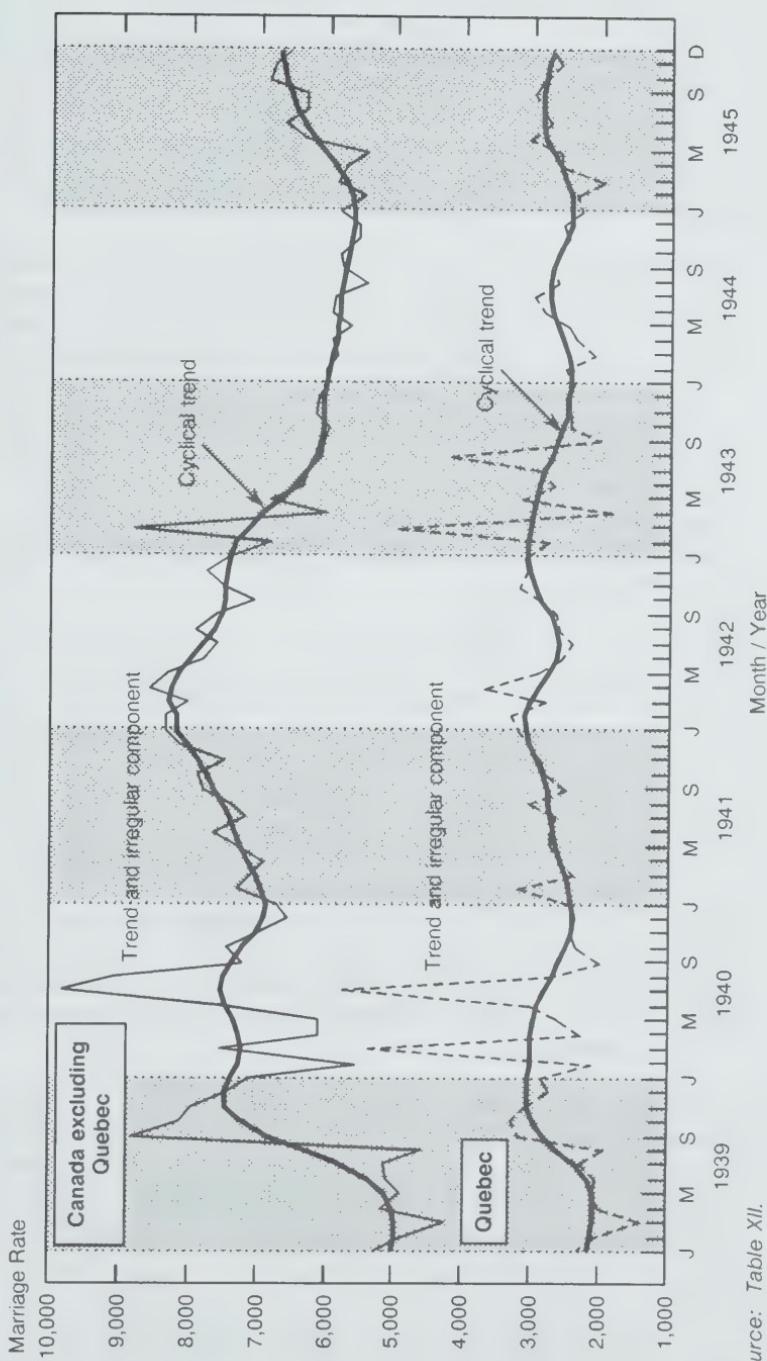
### Conscription During the Second World War

The methodology used to eliminate the seasonal effects of a time series results in an estimate of the trend-cycle. Not only the crude values are cleared of the season effect but the methodology takes into account the erratic values and the occurrence of some days of the week in the month. In this case the trend can be considered as the evolution of nuptiality over the period. The comparison of this trend-cycle with another series of values of which only the seasonal effect has been eliminated highlights "accidents" for which explanations are to be found in social, economic or political events. Thus, on the graph for each region (Quebec and Canada less Quebec) two curves have been drawn: one shows the trend-cycle while the other, the trend and the "accidents" together.

Thus for Canada, the monthly marriage index in Figure 23 rises sharply from May 1939, and two exceptional values are observed in September and October. According to one historian,<sup>42</sup> the explanation for this is Canada's entrance into and preparation for the war; "Memories from the Great War spontaneously

<sup>42</sup> Trépanier, Pierre, Director of *La Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique du Nord*.

Figure 23  
**Movement of Monthly Marriage Rates Regardless of Seasonality, Quebec, and Canada (excluding Quebec),  
1939-1945**



Source: Table XII.

evoked conscription to serve abroad, from which married men were exempted". The curve also contains another surprising value in July 1940. The high marriage rate for that month was seemingly induced by the collapse of France and awareness of the very serious consequences this could have on Canada's war effort. The progression of this trend during 1941 reaches its peak in the spring of 1942. This period coincides with the discussion in Parliament about the appropriateness of conscription, and finally, the order in council that freed the government from its commitment to proceed with conscription.

The beginning of the war marked another turn in Quebec. An increasing trend in marriages is clearly visible, but no peaks are recorded during September and October as for the rest of Canada. According to historians, it is probably because – even when the war was declared – it was thought that the population could avoid conscription to serve abroad, because of a solemn commitment made by the governing Liberal party. However, a peak in March 1940 may be linked to federal elections: the population seems to be suddenly concerned with election results. But the much stronger peak in July could be attributed to the Act adopted in June to authorize conscription for domestic service. Finally, the last peak occurring in February and March 1943 may be attributed to renewed debate about conscription.

### Behaviour Among Cohorts

The evolution of marriage rates among singles since 1921, as described in Chapter 2, shows that single marriage rates are very sensitive to the major crises in contemporary history. The authors thought it would be helpful to reexamine behaviours of two generations, as an example of how individuals reacted to economic and political events since 1921. Readers should consult Tables II and III to remind themselves that from one year to the other, the total marriage rates vary considerably,<sup>43</sup> while the cohort indices of marriage frequency had little variation.<sup>44</sup> From this, one would conclude that the marriage explosion (or conversely, the low periods) occurred when people of all ages from different cohorts pushed to marry (or conversely, postponed their unions). But whether they married early or late does not much change one fact: they married at about the same frequency.

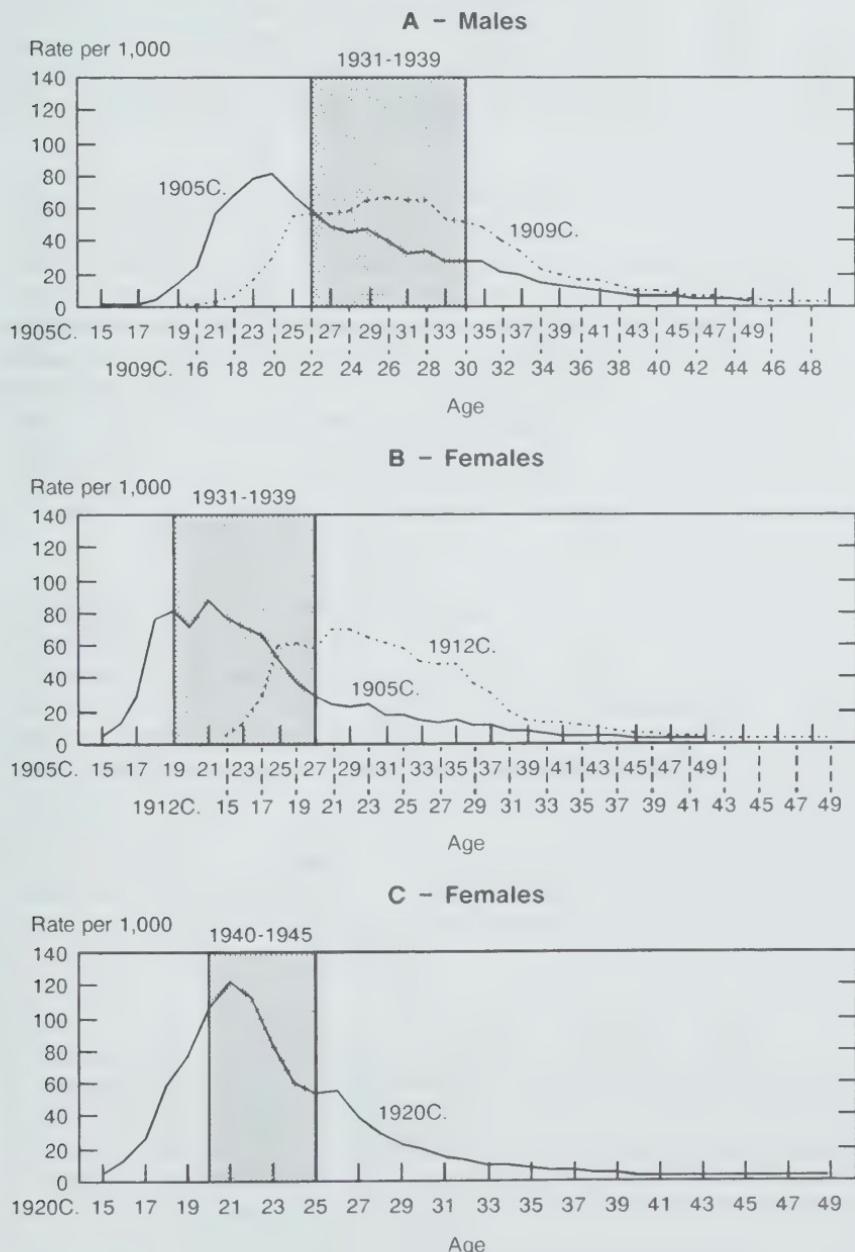
Thus, major economic and political events have modified the marriage tempo of cohorts without seriously altering the marriage rate itself. The Great Depression is a good illustration of this. Impressed by the low values of indexes from the first half of the 1930s, it would be tempting to believe that some cohorts were deeply affected. However, 90% of members from the 1910 male cohort

<sup>43</sup> From 1932 to 1940, in only eight years, the indexes have doubled.

<sup>44</sup> The 1917 male cohort (868 per 1,000), the 1930 generation (956 per 1,000), a difference of 88 per 1,000: 10% in relative terms.

Figure 24

**Marriage Rates by Sex (1905 and 1909 Male Cohorts, 1905, 1912 and 1920 Female Cohorts)**



Source: *Marriage rates by year of age, 1921-1989. Authors' calculations.*

(they were 21 years of age in 1931) married eventually. Though this change is not marginal, it does not represent a very important change in relation to successive cohorts. If one cohort only is considered to be too precarious as a reference point, the group average of the three cohorts from 1910, 1911 and 1912 may be observed. Their average marriage rate was 88.95% while that of the three previous cohorts was 89.01% and that of the three following was 90.15%. The same conclusion remains: the ultimate marriage rate has not changed much from one group to the other.

Though the economic crisis has not ultimately affected the marriage rates for cohorts who lived through the Depression, it has induced variations in the distribution of marriages according to age. Figure 24, by comparing male 1905 and 1909 marriage cohorts, clearly shows that marriage rates declined dramatically among the 1909 male cohort who would be in its early 20s during the most difficult years of the crisis (1931-1934). However, the marriage rate at age 25 to 30 among them is much greater than that of the 1905 cohort during the years that followed. The mode age of marriage for the 1909 cohort is around 26 (instead of 24 for the 1905 cohort), and it has a much lower value. Finally, the post-modal part of the curve is clearly convex which is not the case for 1905, indicating a high number of late marriages (after age 30). There is clearly a phenomenon of "catching up" after the difficult years.

Though the harshest years of the crisis were from 1930 to 1934, economists agree that recovery was slow and that prosperity returned only after the war. Interestingly, the different marriage cohorts did not react in the same way during that period. Figure 24 shows that the 1909 male cohort (and this is also true for neighbouring cohorts) had started to catch up on postponed marriages from 1934 on, with its members aged 25 or older. At the same time, more recent cohorts (those born between 1914 and 1917) who were just about to turn 20, adopted the same slow pace as for marriages between 1930 and 1934. Thus it seems that from 1934 older males married because they felt pressured by their age, and any sign of economic recovery was a good pretext to settle. But this incentive was probably not sufficient reason for more recent cohorts to marry.

Seemingly, the female cohorts reacted in the same way as the male cohorts, at least when the traditional age gap between men and women in marriages is considered. The 1912 female cohort was affected most by the crisis. This cohort of women will be compared with the 1905 cohort in Figure 24. The 1912 cohort was aged 19 at the beginning of the crisis and these women were moving into a period during which marriage rates are usually high. As was the case for the 1909 male cohort relative to that of 1905, the distribution curve of first marriages among these women is more broadly spread than that for women born in 1905. It shows that they did not marry as often in their early 20s as was customary.

## The Second World War

The war provides a second example. As seen earlier, the beginning of the Second World War saw a spectacular increase in marriage, to such an extent that the total marriage rate reached paradoxical values. However, since a never-married person can experience a first marriage only once in a lifetime, one can easily suspect that the period indices skyrocketed as a result of the "tempo change" induced by this socio-political event. In the following section, the behaviour of female cohorts during the war is observed.

Table 23 clearly shows that during 1940-1942, young women aged 19 to 22 (namely those from 1918 to 1922 cohorts) had much higher marriage rates than other cohorts at the same age. These are the women who the young men, fearing conscription, married. Table 23 should be read horizontally to note the difference. However, during the following years, in 1943-1945 in particular, rates were much lower than for previous cohorts, when the 1918 to 1922 cohorts were aged 23 to 28.

**TABLE 23. Marriage Rate During the Second World War of Female Cohorts Born Between 1920 and 1927**

Year Age \	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946
28	402	472	448	445	342	287	287	329
27	483	553	545	520	387	331	341	399
26	594	666	645	601	468	396	398	536
25	713	806	744	699	552	462	532	665
24	821	920	839	824	649	599	650	817
23	895	1,010	930	906	827	715	770	973
22	907	(1,066)	(1,000)	(1,121)	938	822	862	1,078
21	971	(1,141)	(1,216)	(1,240)	1,064	943	1,020	1,254
20	772	(1,057)	(1,068)	(1,102)	973	907	960	1,220
19	763	(909)	(917)	963	895	875	843	1,091
Cohorts	1920C	1921C	1922C	1923C	1924C	1925C	1926C	1927C

Source: Vital Statistics, Statistics Canada and authors' calculations.

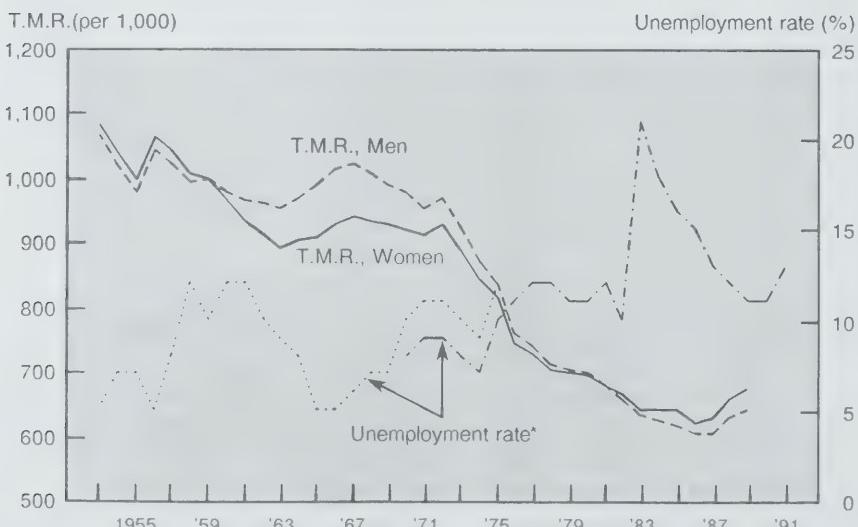
Using the 1920 cohort as an example, Figure 24 shows that after a peak at age 21, the curve fell rapidly. Most certainly, the difficult years of 1942 to 1944 were a factor, but the ‘hurried’ marriages from 1939 to 1942 had drawn heavily from the group of women destined for marriage within that cohort. For this reason, after 1945, there are no marked highs. Women from the 1920-1921 cohorts were affected by two exceptional periods. Women from these cohorts were indeed sought for marriage at the very beginning of the war, when they were aged 19 to 21, and again at age 25 and 26 (in 1946 and in the following years, when economic prosperity had increased). As a result, at age 50, 95% of them had married, which was a record until the 1931 cohort. However, women from the 1923-1924 cohorts were too young to marry at the onset of the war. For this reason, their marriage curve is much more typical.

### Marriage and Economic Conditions

As society increased its protection of individuals against eventual misfortune, demographic behaviour became less sensitive to the economic conditions. Sociological literature is full of examples from ancient and recent history about obvious relationships between the economic welfare of a population and its death rate or its reproductive behaviour. In Chapter 2, even without discussion,

Figure 25

### Total First Marriage Rate and Unemployment Rate among Men Aged 20-24, Canada, 1953-1991



\* This rate was calculated according to two different methods.

Source: Vital Statistics and 1990 General Social Survey.

the drop in marriage in the 1930s was linked to the Great Depression, and this point was reinforced in the previous paragraphs. Most certainly, for a detailed demonstration, the choice of an economic indicator and the measure of marriage behaviour must be done carefully. With an index which is too global, like the general level of employment with all ages and sexes combined, the correlation may not be highlighted. However, more sensitive fluctuations are illuminated by choosing a more refined index. By choosing the unemployment rate of young men aged 20 to 24<sup>45</sup> on the one hand, and the estimated marriage rate on the other, a negative correlation is shown. High unemployment periods among these young men is matched by lower marriage rates, and conversely, low unemployment by higher marriage rates.

One must guard against interpreting too deeply very general correlations, but in this case one would be inclined to think that insofar as marriage is an act with economic implications, the male economic situation is still a determining factor. General or female unemployment shows no such correlation.

## Choosing a Spouse

### Same-faith Marriages

An homogamy<sup>46</sup> index is significant only when it deviates from the random probabilities. Thus random probabilities must exist. Without careful examination, conclusions based on statistics about same-faith marriages are dubious. Same-faith marriages are only significant if they can be measured against random probabilities. Thus, in the case of same-faith marriages, index for categories, among Catholics, for example, should be compared to possible results if non-Catholic spouses existed. Without this precaution, data may not be truly significant. Same-faith marriage among Catholics is apparently 100% in an exclusively Catholic environment. For this reason, discussion about this theme will be brief since the conditions required to make a fully satisfactory interpretation are not found anywhere in Canada.

Table 24 gives the proportions of men and women marrying a person of the same faith. For all periods, persons from the Jewish faith are found in greatest numbers marrying members of their own faith and Catholics are a close second. Among those who marry persons from other faiths, Protestants most likely have inter-faith marriages. This is likely because the distinction between Protestant forms of worship are less pronounced than with the Catholic or the Jewish faiths. For all religions, same-faith marriages declined considerably during the 1960s.

<sup>45</sup> A significant portion of first marriages occur among the 20 to 24 age group.

<sup>46</sup> Homogamy can be defined as the choice of a spouse showing the same characteristics and it can be established on religious, ethnic or cultural grounds.

**TABLE 24. Proportion of Marriages within the Same Religious Group, by Religion of Bride and Groom, Canada, 1930-1932 to 1970-1972**

Religion	1930-1932	1935-1937	1940-1942	1945-1947	1950-1952	1955-1957	1960-1962	1965-1967	1970-1972
	<b>Groom</b>								
Anglican	54.8	53.8	51.5	49.0	50.4	50.3	49.2	45.1	38.2
Baptist	50.3	50.8	45.6	43.4	44.7	45.0	45.6	40.6	37.7
Catholic	91.5	92.2	90.4	89.9	89.0	88.7	88.1	85.4	80.5
United Church	66.5	66.8	65.4	61.3	62.5	62.8	61.2	56.3	50.5
Jewish	96.8	96.5	93.9	94.4	92.7	90.6	89.0	88.0	82.7
Lutheran	65.5	54.6	46.3	41.0	50.7	49.7	43.4	34.7	27.9
Presbyterian	48.4	42.3	38.4	35.3	36.1	37.5	35.7	31.7	26.3
	<b>Bride</b>								
Anglican	56.6	55.5	54.1	49.5	49.9	50.1	47.4	43.0	37.7
Baptist	49.2	50.7	46.0	43.1	45.2	46.5	45.7	42.3	38.6
Catholic	89.2	89.9	88.0	88.1	87.8	87.5	87.2	84.1	78.7
United Church	64.4	63.9	62.4	60.3	61.0	60.5	59.1	54.5	48.0
Jewish	98.2	98.0	97.0	96.6	96.9	96.0	94.6	92.4	87.9
Lutheran	69.2	60.2	50.5	44.1	50.7	51.2	47.4	38.6	28.8
Presbyterian	53.9	49.5	44.5	40.6	41.2	41.1	38.4	33.1	27.1

Sources: BASAVARAJAPPA, K.G., NORRIS, M.J. et HALLI, S.S. (1988), "Spouse Selection in Canada, 1921-1978: An Examination by Age, Sex and Religion", *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 20(2), pp. 214-215.

### Ethnocultural Marriages in Canada

In Canada, about one out of six Canadians is a first-generation immigrant and their countries of origin are much more varied than in the past. However, a significant portion of immigrants are singles and therefore, candidates for marriage. Another portion will become candidates after divorce or widowhood. However, inter-marriage among ethnic groups is an important factor of cultural assimilation and a powerful integration agent of inheritances for future generations which contribute to the formation of a country. What is Canada's situation from this point of view?

Measuring ethnocultural marriage in Canada is difficult because statistics are rather scarce. The main data sources are the censuses that identify marital characteristics of individuals, and provincial records where marriages contracted by individuals are compiled.

From 1981 to 1985, almost 1 million marriages occurred in Canada, and for each one, the country of origin for both spouses appears on the marriage record. The following information is obtained by comparing the birthplace of spouses. This information is very limited and a few warnings are necessary.

**TABLE 25. Marriage Distribution by Place of Birth of Spouses,  
Canada, 1981-1985**

		Groom born in Canada	Foreign-born groom	Total
		All marriages		
Bride born in Canada	Nbre	716,921	55,457	772,378
	%	76.9	5.9	82.8
Foreign-born bride	Nbre	78,050	82,382	160,432
	%	8.4	8.8	17.2
Total	Nbre	794,971	137,839	932,810
	%	85.3	14.7	100.0
		Marriages between two singles		
Bride born in Canada	Nbre	525,005	48,061	573,066
	%	79.5	7.3	86.8
Foreign-born bride	Nbre	33,379	56,296	89,675
	%	5.1	8.5	13.6
Total	Nbre	558,384	104,357	662,741
	%	84.6	15.8	100.0
		Remarriage for one of the spouses		
Bride born in Canada	Nbre	191,916	29,989	221,905
	%	71.1	11.1	82.2
Foreign-born bride	Nbre	22,066	26,098	48,164
	%	8.2	9.7	17.9
Total	Nbre	213,982	56,087	270,069
	%	79.3	20.8	100.0

Source: DUMAS, J.(1990), *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada, 1988*, Current Demographic Analysis, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, p. 35 (Cat. No. 91-209E).

Though the country of origin for people who marry in Canada is known, their age at immigration is not known. Nor is it known which ethnocultural group native-born Canadians feel they belonged to when they married. Their social or economic status is unknown as well. Thus, cultural homogamy will not be measured in detail and as a consequence, instead of a true analysis a simple description of the situation will be offered.

Among the 932,810 marriages between 1981 and 1985, 772,378 female spouses (82.8%) and 794,971 male spouses (85.2%) were born in Canada. Of course, the majority of marriages (716,921 or 76.9%) united spouses who were both born in Canada. For the purpose of analysis, this is a first group. The others

(215,889 marriages) involved at least one foreign-born spouse (23% of all marriages). These constitute a second group. Marriages between two foreign-born persons amount to 82,376, that is, 8.8% of marriages (or 38% of the second group). Marriages of foreign-born women to Canadian-born spouses total 78,050 (8.4% of marriages, or 36% of the second group), while 55,457 male immigrants married a woman born in Canada (6% of marriages and 26% of the second group). In the first approach, men seem to be more inclined to look for an immigrant spouse and, at the opposite, immigrant females seem to be more likely to marry a Canadian-born spouse.

The 932,810 traceable marriages are distributed in two categories: marriages in which both spouses were single (662,741), and those in which one or both spouses were previously married (270,069) (Table 25). These two types of unions provide different images. When marriage occurs between two singles, 79.5% of marriages involve persons born in Canada; 8.5% involve two persons born abroad; 7.3% involve a man born abroad and a woman born in Canada; and 5.1% involve a man born in Canada and a female immigrant. Thus 12.4% of marriages are mixed marriages and – notwithstanding the hypothesis about the data's significance – they show a certain integration.

In the case of remarriage of one or both spouses (270,069), 71.1% of marriages united two persons born in Canada, 9.7% united two persons born abroad, 11.1% united a foreign-born man and a woman born in Canada, and 8.2% united a female immigrant and a man born in Canada. Thus 19.3% of remarriages are mixed; in other words, they involve only one Canadian-born spouse. The higher portion of mixed remarriages is not surprising, but that this portion is not even higher is surprising. Those who had a marriage breakdown would have more access to a native Canadian marriage market than for their first marriage because they had lived in Canada longer. If a differential in propensity to divorce had to exist between those born in Canada and foreign born, many reasons lead one to believe that the propensity of immigrants should be higher.

Of course, the choices are affected by the size of the foreign-born population that has emigrated to Canada. For example, a foreign-born man is more likely to marry a woman born in his country if many from his homeland emigrated to Canada and settled in one region of Canada. In large cities "ethnic wards" attract people of the same origin; for instance, "Chinatowns" in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver are well known. On the other hand, marriage within an ethnic group, (and in particular, among those with a high propensity to marry spouses of their own ethnicity) is probably underestimated because those marrying a native-born Canadian often marry someone whose parents immigrated from the same country of origin.

There is never a great discrepancy, by country of birth, between the number of married men and married women (except for a few countries like Italy and Greece) (Table 26). However, natives of certain countries tend to choose a spouse

TABLE 26. Marriages in Canada between 1981 and 1985 of Foreign-born Persons by Country of Birth of the Spouses<sup>1</sup>

Place of birth		GROOM															
		China	India and Pakistan	Japan	Other Asian countries	British Territories		South America	Greece	Italy	Pol- and	Port- ugal	France	Ger- many	Holl- and	Yugos- lavia	Syria
Number	4,581	6,771	799	10,706	6,560	3,377	9,974	7,734	2,044	10,406	3,168	5,886	2,685	7,102	4,023	2,479	1,509
% of marriages from the same cultural group	87	74	73	83	78	61	64	57	33	23	52	59	9	10	10	35	34
China	4,262	88	2,726		4,642		242	778									
India and Pakistan	5,755	86															
Japan	914	61				550	11										
Other Asian Countries	12,087	76	312	116	34	8,260	437										
British Territories in Asia	6,158	83	943	113		285	3,802										
B British Territories in R Africa	2,755	75		117			1,892										
I British Territories in D America	9,451	67							6,043	244							
E South America	7,725	59							334	4,124							96
Greece	1,079	62									666						
Italy	5,996	39										2,354					
Poland	3,084	53										1,633					
Portugal	5,166	67								72		3,378					
France	2,469	10											237				
Germany	6,223	12											740				
Holland	2,539	16											406				
Yugoslavia	1,808	48											867				
Syria	909	56														509	

<sup>1</sup> This table is not complete. It includes only the countries from where at least 1,000 spouses were identified.  
 Source: Unpublished data and calculations by the authors.

born in their own country or a country with the same culture – indeed with the same language. Women tend to marry within their ethnicity more than men. Some cultures are very restrictive in their choice: based on marriages from 1981 to 1985, when a Chinese man marries in Canada, in 87% of cases his wife was born in China, in a British territory in Asia, or in another Asian country. Indian or Pakistani men marry (in 75% of cases) women born in India, or in a British territory in Asia or Africa where large Indian minorities are located. Japanese men marry Japanese women 73 times out of 100. The nationals of British territories in Asia choose their wives from India, China, or other Asian countries three-quarters of the time.

Others marry within their own ethnicity less often: people born in the British territories in Africa (56%) or South Asia (65%), in Poland (52%), in Portugal (59%), and immigrants from South America (53%). Finally, some tend not to marry within their ethnicity: persons from Greece (33%), from Italy (23%), immigrants from Africa (19%), from France (9%), from Germany (10%), from Holland (10%), from Yugoslavia (35%) or from Syria (34%). Those from the United Kingdom and the United States have a high tendency to marry native-born Canadians, and other ethnic groups.

### Age at Marriage

In previous chapters one can see that the average age at marriage over time has fluctuated but still remains within relatively narrow limits. The 1860 cohorts married very late when the average age of male spouses was 29, and that of the wives was 26. Exceptionally, during the seventeenth century (around 1650) the average marrying age of women was less than 20. During recent periods, using cross-sectional indices, the average age varies from 25 to 28 for men, and from 22.5 to 26 for women. What remained constant is that men always married younger women. This practice is probably based on psychological factors as each sex develops toward maturity at a different speed. However, this difference in average ages has varied over time because the marrying ages of men and women have fluctuated independently to some extent. This question has intrigued many researchers and attempts were first made to find demographic explanations. If the choice of a spouse according to age is the result of a wish, it may only be fulfilled if that age group is available to marry. Louis Henri, in a famous article,<sup>47</sup> showed that following the loss of men in the First World War, women changed their choice by marrying older men, but more so, men younger than previous cohorts had married. Thus at age 50, the marriage age was only marginally lower. Chapter 1 showed how the massive immigration of men in the mid-seventeenth century accounted for early marriage among women. However, a major demographic factor which can affect the age of marriage is fertility and its fluctuations.

<sup>47</sup> Henri, Louis. Perturbations de la nuptialité résultant de la guerre, 1914-1918 in *Population*, 21<sup>e</sup> année mars-avril 1966, numéro 2, Direction et administration, Paris.

To simplify, one could say that boys and girls are born in equal numbers. As well, differential child mortality can be considered negligible. If the birth rate is constant during a given period, 23 or 24 years later these children, who have grown into men and women, would have no difficulty finding a spouse, year after year, on the same model – namely with the desired age differential of two years.

TABLE 27. Average Age at First Marriage, Canada, 1955-1989

Year	Males	Females	Difference
1955	26.2	23.3	2.9
1956	26.0	23.1	3.0
1957	25.9	23.0	3.0
1958	25.9	22.9	3.0
1959	25.7	22.8	3.0
1960	25.7	22.7	3.1
1961	25.6	22.6	3.0
1962	25.5	22.5	3.0
1963	25.6	22.8	2.8
1964	25.4	22.7	2.7
1965	25.3	22.6	2.7
1966	25.2	22.6	2.6
1967	25.0	22.6	2.4
1968	25.0	22.6	2.4
1969	25.0	22.7	2.3
1970	24.9	22.7	2.2
1971	24.9	22.6	2.3
1972	24.7	22.2	2.5
1973	24.7	22.3	2.4
1974	24.7	22.4	2.3
1975	24.9	22.5	2.4
1976	25.0	22.7	2.3
1977	25.1	22.8	2.3
1978	25.2	23.0	2.2
1979	25.4	23.1	2.3
1980	25.5	23.3	2.2
1981	25.7	23.5	2.2
1982	25.9	23.7	2.2
1983	26.2	24.0	2.2
1984	26.5	24.3	2.2
1985	26.7	24.6	2.1
1986	27.0	24.8	2.2
1987	27.4	25.2	2.2
1988	27.6	25.5	2.1
1989	27.8	25.7	2.1

Source: Statistics Canada, Vital Statistics.

If the birth rate increases suddenly, some 20 years later, men and women of the same age would be in equal numbers, but this equality would create an imbalance in the marriage market. Men would be in demand since great numbers of women would be seeking a husband among the less populous classes of older men, namely those born before the increase in births. Among women who want to marry without delay, some would choose a spouse whose age is closer to theirs. Conversely, if a decline in fertility occurred, 20 years later, women would be in demand, because men would be seeking spouses among cohorts smaller than required by the demand.

Most certainly, this phenomenon is not simply theoretical, but it is difficult to prove for several reasons. Among others, the variations in the birth rate span several years, which reduces its effects; migration phenomena introduce irregular fluctuations; and also, the size of the marriage pool depends individually and collectively on factors increasingly more numerous and foreign to demography.

Be that as it may, Table 27 shows the fluctuations of age at first marriage for the past 34 years. The variations were broad and notably increased since 1972 for both sexes. Also the age difference between the spouses during these past 34 years declined by almost one year.

TABLE 28. Evolution of Total First Marriage Rates by Sex 1974-1989,  
and Number of Births by Sex, with a Two-year Sex Lag,  
1950-1965

Year	Total marriage rate		Sex ratio	Births				Sex ratio
	Males	Females		Year	Males	Year	Females	
1989	642	675	95.1	1965	215,112	1967	181,067	118.8
1988	627	657	95.4	1964	232,657	1966	188,782	123.2
1987	605	629	96.2	1963	238,865	1965	203,483	117.4
1986	603	619	97.4	1962	240,870	1964	220,258	109.4
1985	615	638	96.4	1961	244,403	1963	226,902	107.7
1984	622	639	97.3	1960	246,029	1962	228,823	107.5
1983	630	639	98.6	1959	246,073	1961	231,297	106.4
1982	656	663	98.9	1958	241,675	1960	232,522	104
1981	679	676	100.4	1957	241,073	1959	233,202	103.4
1980	698	695	100.4	1956	231,697	1958	228,443	101.4
1979	703	696	101.1	1955	227,382	1957	228,020	99.7
1978	711	700	101.6	1954	224,168	1956	219,042	102.3
1977	739	725	101.9	1953	214,423	1955	215,555	99.5
1976	760	741	102.6	1952	208,070	1954	212,030	98.1
1975	835	812	102.8	1951	195,918	1953	203,461	96.3
1974	870	843	103.2	1950	191,413	1952	195,489	97.9

Source: Data published by the Canadian Center for Health Information.

The effect of these fertility variations on marriage is more visible through the cross-sectional differences between male and female total marriage rates. Since the late-1970s, the total male marriage rate has been lower than the total female marriage rate. This situation results from the imbalance of future marriageable populations at birth, which in turn result from a change in fertility 20 years ago.

When it comes to marriage, for example, men aged 24 prefer women aged 22. Table 28 shows that male cohorts prior to 1955 were in minority at birth in relation to the female cohorts two years younger. Having no difficulty in finding a spouse, their marriage rates and their total marriage index were higher than those of women. Conversely, the cohorts from the late-1950s were in majority at birth in relation to female cohorts two years younger; and accordingly, from the mid-1980s the total marriage indices have reversed.

### Marriage Outlines

Observing mean age at marriage, even if it refers only to singles, does not provide sufficient information about marital habits. To get a more precise outline of behaviours, marriages from an entire year must be broken down into different types and analyzed according to the spouses' age. It would be interesting to learn how each of these structures fluctuated over time, but data are readily available only for recent years. Thus, only two years have been selected for analysis: 1977, because it is distant enough from the 1969 liberalization of divorce, and 1987, which reflects the current situation. Differences will indicate the trends.

TABLE 29. Marriage Distribution by Marital Status of the Spouses,  
Canada, 1977-1987

Type of marriage	Number		Percentage	
	1977	1987	1977	1987
Single male with single female	142,594	122,133	76.1	67.1
Divorced male with divorced female	11,269	19,451	6.0	10.7
Widower with widow	3,324	2,643	1.8	1.5
Single male with divorced female	10,666	15,030	5.7	8.3
Single male with widow	1,646	1,280	0.9	0.7
Divorced male with single female	12,991	16,305	6.9	9.0
Widower with single female	1,269	874	0.7	0.5
Divorced male with widow	1,965	2,356	1.0	1.3
Widower with divorced female	1,618	2,079	0.9	1.1
Total	187,342	182,151	100.0	100.2

Source: Vital Statistics.

Figure 26  
Distribution of Marriages in which a Single Man Married a Single Woman, Canada, 1977 and 1987

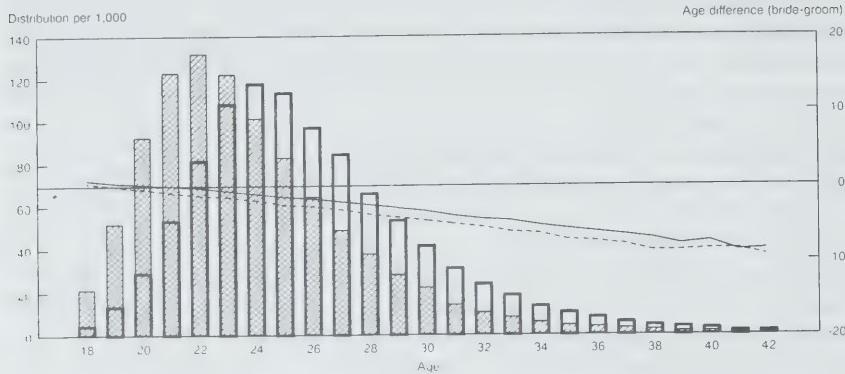


Figure 27  
Distribution of Marriages in which a Divorced Man Married a Single Woman, Canada, 1977 and 1987

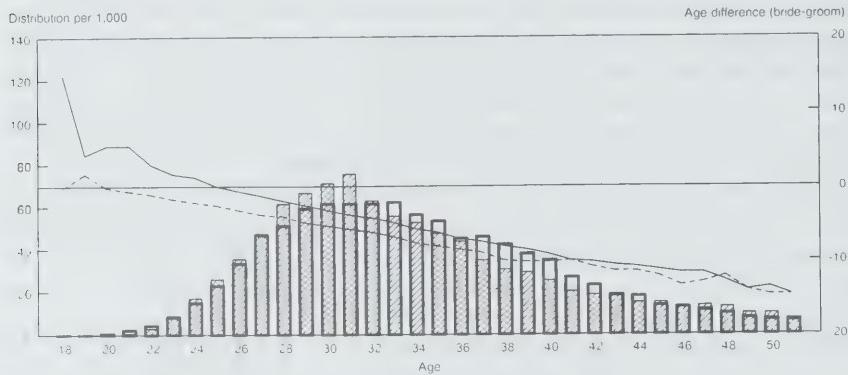


Figure 28  
Distribution of Marriages in which a Single Man Married a Divorced Woman, Canada, 1977 and 1987

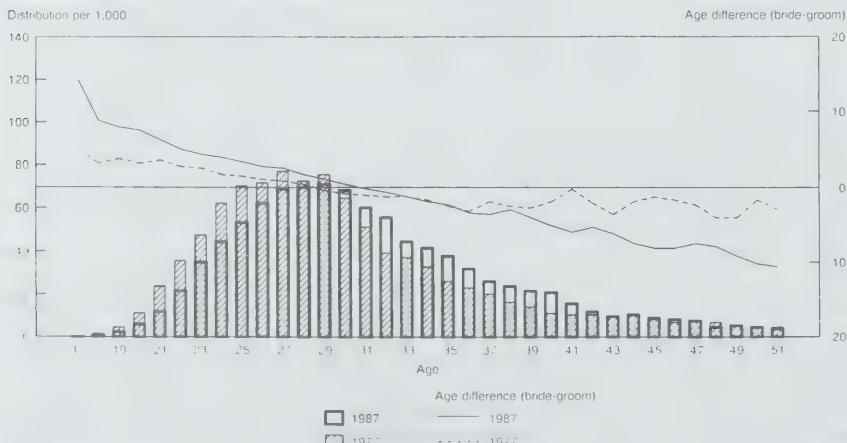
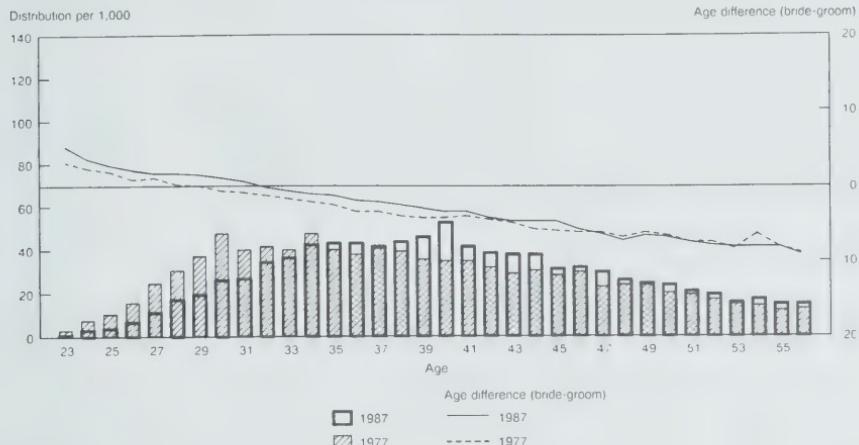


Figure 29

**Distribution of Marriages in which a Divorced Man Married a Divorced Woman, Canada, 1977 and 1987**



Source Tables XIV-G and XIV-H

Figure 30

**Distribution of Marriages in which a Widower Remarried, Canada, 1977 and 1987**



Source Tables XIV-I and XIV-J

Marriage involves two persons who may be in any of the three following groups: single, widowed, or divorced. Therefore, there are nine possible types of marriages, as follows (Table 29).

Figures for the five most important types have been prepared. For each type the proportion of the marriage of the type according to age of the male spouse is provided. Also each gives the average age of the female spouse according to the age differential with her spouse.

#### A Single Man Marries a Single Woman (Figure 26)

Some time ago, this type of marriage was standard but it became less frequent (even though it still dominates). However, in 1989, it accounted for only two-thirds of marriages while it represented three-quarters ten years earlier and four-fifths in 1971. This considerable drop is the result of the increase in marriages involving one divorce. This type of marriage is characterized by a high concentration: more than 85% of spouses are in their 20s and the situation was the same in 1977. The modal age of the husband is 24, which is two years older than in 1977. The husband's mean age is 26.5. When the husband's age is above 21, the wife's average age is lower as is the case in 90% of marriages of this type before age 50.

#### A Divorced Man Marries a Single Woman (Figure 27)

This type of marriage increased in number. In 1977 it accounted for only 7% of all marriages but in 1987, it represented 9% of them. The age concentration is less marked than for the previous type. It is only at age 42 for the husband that this type of marriage reaches 85% and the situation has not changed since 1977. It is very infrequent before age 25 among men; in 75% of cases men's ages are between 25 and 39 years of age. The modal age of the husband is 33, which is much higher than for the previous type of marriage, and it is two years older relative to the modal age in 1977. The average age of men who married before age 50 was 32.9, and the average age of their spouses was 24.4. In 1987, the men's average age was 34.4 and their spouses' average age rose to 27.8. While the wife's average age is higher than the husband's in only 5% of cases, when the husband is older than 25, the wife's average age is lower, and the older the husband, the greater the age differential over the younger wife.

The way this type of marriage is distributed is not at all surprising considering that, even though the second marriage occurs at an early age, the divorced man's age at second marriage is increased by the years spent in his first marriage. On average, the wives of these remarried men are older than the single-single marriages because divorced men do not have the same choice for spouses as their single counterparts. Conversely, older single women seeking a husband of compatible age must include divorced men in their choices.

### A Divorced Woman Marries a Single Man (Figure 28)

This type of marriage is almost as common as the previous type, and is also increasing. It accounted for 7% of marriages in 1977, and for 9% in 1987. Also, this type of marriage is more concentrated in relation to the husband's age: 85% of the marriages among people younger than 50 involve a husband younger than 38. Hence the mean age at marriage of those younger than 50 is 31.5, and the mode age is around 29. What may seem surprising is that the wife's average age (36.2) is higher than the husband's. In 59% of cases the wife is older than her second husband. When the husband is older than 31, on average the wife's age is lower. Then the average age difference between wife and husband increases, the wife being relatively younger and younger. Of course, in this case, the woman grew older during her first marriage.

There has been no major change since 1977, except for mean ages. Partners were younger, the husbands' average age was 30.3 and the wife's was higher at 33.7. The rejuvenation is mainly attributable to the marriage duration at divorce, which declined between the two periods.

### The Marriage of Two Divorcees (Figure 29)

The marriage distribution according to spouses' age is very broad because both divorcees lived through a first marriage contracted at a different age. In fact, for these marriages, 85% is reached only after age 50 for the husband. Hence the mean age for men is 38.8 and 28.2 for women. The situation has not changed much since 1977. Both spouses have become slightly older. In 11.5% of cases, namely marriages in which one spouse is older than 31, the wife is older. After that, she becomes relatively younger and younger.

### Remarriage of Widowers and Widows (Figure 30)

This type of marriage is increasingly rare. It was historically important when death reduced the adult population, but it lost much of its prominence and now concerns almost exclusively old people. Only 25% of remarriage involving widowers occurs before age 50, and remarriage of widowers accounts for only 3% of marriages. In 50% of cases, widowers remarry widows.

### Summary

These different types of marriage raise three key points: 1) the age of spouses depends to a great extent on their past marital experiences; 2) most of the time, men marry women younger than themselves, if one excludes the few marriages by very young men. The only exception to this rule is remarriage between divorced women and single men, where most often the wife is older than the husband; 3) whatever the type of marriage, the age at marriage is increasing for both sexes, likely because of the increase in common-law unions which are either a prelude to marriage or an event between two marriages.



## **Chapter 6**

### **THE MARRIAGE PLIGHT AND CONJUGAL LIFE**

As seen in previous chapters, profound changes during the 1970s and 1980s affected the behaviour of Canadians towards marriage and its dissolution, resulting in increased marital mobility for men and women and a rise in common-law relationships. This chapter will examine these two recent modifications in conjugal life.

#### **Increase in Marital Mobility**

Canadians' changing attitudes about marriage and divorce have had – and will have – numerous repercussions on married life but their impact depends on the cohort to which they belong. This is illustrated by reconstructing the past marital history of several cohorts and projecting their history, assuming they maintain the new behaviour in the future. This was done with the eight five-year age groups born between June 1, 1921 and May 31, 1961.<sup>48</sup> Using an algorithm developed by R. Schoen,<sup>49</sup> marital life tables were compiled for men and women from these eight groups. They take into account the actual mortality, marriage, divorce and widowhood of these cohorts from their birth to the end of 1985. Future situations are based on conditions that prevailed during the 1980s. Together the results provide a complete picture of the long-term effects of demographic changes before the middle of the last decade.

#### **Marriages and Remarriages Within Each Cohort**

Table 30 shows the number of first marriages and remarriages, from birth,<sup>50</sup> per 100,000 persons for each five-year male or female cohort. This demographic count combines the effects of the death, marriage and divorce rates; in other words, trends derived from the table do not reflect only marriage changes. They also reflect, sometimes to a greater extent, changes from one cohort to another in the size of the marriage pool (singles of a marriageable age and persons widowed or divorced at an age when remarriage is conceivable).

<sup>48</sup> Pérón, Y., Lapierre-Adamcyk, E. and Morissette, D. (1989). *Vie conjugale et parentale en mutation: une analyse par cohortes*. Research report submitted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Montreal, Groupe de recherche sur la démographie québécoise, Montreal University, 132 p.

<sup>49</sup> Schoen, R. (1975) "Constructing increment-decrement life tables", *Demography*, 12, pp. 313-324.

<sup>50</sup> Figures from this section concerning first marriages should not be compared with those from earlier chapters where the cohort under study was composed of 10,000 singles aged 15 for women, and 17 for men.

TABLE 30. First Marriages and Remarriages by Sex, Canada, Cohorts from 1921-1926 to 1956-1961

		First marriages	Re-marriage after widowhood	Re-marriage after divorce	All re-marriages	All marriages	Ratio of all re-marriages over first marriages
Female cohorts							
1921-1926	N.	78,908	3,853	5,052	8,905	87,813	1.11
	%	89.9	4.4	5.8	10.1	100.0	1.11
1926-1931	N.	82,846	3,928	6,965	10,893	93,739	1.13
	%	88.4	4.2	7.4	11.6	100.0	1.13
1931-1936	N.	85,142	3,768	9,498	13,266	98,408	1.16
	%	86.5	3.8	9.7	13.5	100.0	1.16
1936-1941	N.	86,259	3,594	13,226	16,820	103,079	1.19
	%	83.7	3.5	12.8	16.3	100.0	1.19
1941-1946	N.	87,571	3,113	17,650	20,763	108,334	1.24
	%	80.8	2.9	16.3	19.2	100.0	1.24
1946-1951	N.	87,902	2,985	21,348	24,333	112,235	1.28
	%	78.3	2.7	19.0	21.7	100.0	1.28
1951-1956	N.	85,595	2,824	22,471	25,295	110,890	1.30
	%	77.2	2.5	20.3	22.8	100.0	1.30
1956-1961	N.	83,146	2,681	21,124	23,805	106,951	1.29
	%	77.7	2.5	19.8	22.3	100.0	1.29
Male cohorts							
1921-1926	N.	74,509	4,338	6,607	10,945	85,454	1.15
	%	87.2	5.1	7.7	12.8	100.0	1.15
1926-1931	N.	79,656	4,220	9,744	13,964	93,620	1.18
	%	85.1	4.5	10.4	14.9	100.0	1.18
1931-1936	N.	81,478	3,976	13,517	17,493	98,971	1.21
	%	82.3	4.0	13.7	17.7	100.0	1.21
1936-1941	N.	84,206	3,930	18,402	22,332	106,538	1.27
	%	79.0	3.7	17.3	21.0	100.0	1.27
1941-1946	N.	85,779	4,318	23,141	27,459	113,238	1.32
	%	75.8	3.8	20.4	24.2	100.0	1.32
1946-1951	N.	85,704	4,079	26,096	30,175	115,879	1.35
	%	74.0	3.5	22.5	26.0	100.0	1.35
1951-1956	N.	83,314	3,922	25,732	29,654	112,968	1.36
	%	73.8	3.5	22.8	26.3	100.0	1.36
1956-1961	N.	81,927	3,803	24,200	28,003	109,930	1.34
	%	74.5	3.5	22.0	25.5	100.0	1.34

Source: PÉRON, Yves, LAPIERRE-ADAMCYK, Evelyne et MORISSETTE, Denis, *Vie conjugale et parentale en mutation: une analyse par cohortes*, Rapport de recherche soumis au Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada, Montréal, Groupe de recherche sur la démographie québécoise, Université de Montréal, 1989, pp. 33 et 34.

An increase in first marriages is first notable from cohort to cohort, reaching a peak of almost 86,000 among men born during the 1940s, and nearly 88,000 among women born during the same decade. This increase is greater among men (15%) than among women (11%), essentially because the decrease in childhood mortality meant that more people reached a marriageable age. Among subsequent cohorts, the positive effect of decreasing mortality on the number of marriages is steady, and partially compensates for the decreasing rate of first marriages. In spite of their lower inclination to marry, the 1950s cohorts produced more first marriages than those from the 1920s, simply because of their greater numbers and because they were likely to reach marriage age.

The increase in the number of remarriages is even more striking. Calculated per 100,000, remarriages among men climb from less than 11,000 for the 1921-1926 cohorts, to more than 30,000 for the 1946-1951 cohorts. Among women, the number increases from less than 9,000 for the 1921-1926 cohorts to more than 25,000 for the 1951-1956 cohorts. These huge increases are attributable to a fourfold rise in remarriages of divorcees. On the other hand, remarriages among widowed persons change slowly. In all likelihood, remarriages will be lower for the very latest cohorts.

Because of the double effect of increased first marriages and increased remarriages, the total number of marriages increased dramatically for the cohorts of the 1930s and 1940s: among men they increased from less than 86,000 per 100,000 population for the 1921-1926 cohorts to more than 115,000 for the 1946-1951 cohorts. Among women, marriages increased from less than 88,000 per 100,000 population for the 1921-1926 cohorts to more than 112,000 for that of 1946-1951. In spite of a reversal of the trend, the 1950s cohorts will show a high number of marriages: almost 110,000 among males and nearly 107,000 among females for the 1956-1961 cohorts.

Of this total, never-married singles represent a declining proportion. Whereas first marriages represent slightly more than 87% of marriages among the 1921-1926 male cohorts, they represent only about 74% of marriages for recent cohorts. Among women, their share declined from 90% for the 1921-1926 cohorts to slightly more than 77% for the 1950s' cohorts. This implies a major increase in the average number of marriages of each person who marries: from 1.15 to 1.34 among men, and 1.11 to 1.29 among women. This significant increase of the marital mobility shows that, rising divorce rates should not be considered as a rejection of marriage as an institution, at least not until the mid-1980s.

#### **Marriage Duration and Years Spent Married**

An increase in divorces, the rising proportion of marriages that were remarriages, and older brides and grooms combine to significantly decrease the average duration of marriages. Marriages between people born in the 1920s have

**TABLE 31. Average Duration of Marriage, Male and Female Cohorts, 1921-1926 to 1956-1961, Canada (in Years)**

Cohort	Females	Males
1921-1926	39.0	38.3
1926-1931	39.0	38.3
1931-1936	38.0	36.9
1936-1941	36.4	35.6
1941-1946	34.9	34.0
1946-1951	33.3	32.9
1951-1956	32.2	32.0
1956-1961	31.6	31.6

Source: PÉRON, Y., LAPIERRE-ADAMCYK, E. et MORISSETTE,D.(1989) *Vie conjugale et parentale en mutation: une analyse par cohortes*, Rapport de recherche soumis au Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada, Montréal, Groupe de recherche sur la démographie québécoise, Université de Montréal, p. 45.

an average duration of 38 to 39 years but the average duration for marriages between men and women born in the late 1950s is expected to fall to less than 32 years (Table 31), a reduction of about seven years from the eldest to the latest cohorts.

Because of the increased proportion of remarriages, the total length of time spent married by someone who has been married deviates increasingly from the average duration of a marriage. Among men, it fell from 44.4 years for the 1921-1926 cohorts, to 41.7 years for the 1956-1961 cohorts, a drop of only about two and a half years; similarly, among women, it fell from 43.3 years for the 1921-1926 cohorts to 40.8 years for that of 1956-1961. Despite the significant decline in the average duration of marriage, members of the youngest cohorts will still be married for more than 40 years, but with an important change: their married life will be concentrated in one union less often than their elders.

In Table 32, adult life is divided into years as single, married, widowed and divorced. Childhood years and old age were intentionally omitted because, except for widowhood, changes in marital status occur almost exclusively among adults.

Tables, as long as they are entitled with a predictive value, show that adulthood will continue to be divided mainly between years as single or married, the latter clearly dominating the former. Even for the latest cohorts, years of divorce and widowhood combined represent less than 5% of men's lives and less than 10% of women's lives because prematurely widowed persons are few, particularly among men, and divorcees tend to remarry after a relatively short period.

**TABLE 32. Average Number of Years Lived Between Ages 15 and 65,  
and Distribution by Marital Status, Canada, Male and  
Female Cohorts 1921-1926 to 1956-1961**

	Average number	Percent distribution				
		Singles	Married	Widows	Divorced	Total
Female cohort						
1921-1926	47.8	24.9	69.3	4.0	1.8	100.0
1926-1931	48.1	21.4	72.5	3.8	2.3	100.0
1931-1936	48.3	20.6	72.0	3.8	3.6	100.0
1936-1941	48.4	20.2	71.3	3.6	4.9	100.0
1941-1946	48.4	20.7	70.2	3.3	5.8	100.0
1946-1951	48.5	22.1	68.1	3.2	6.6	100.0
1951-1956	48.4	26.1	64.1	3.1	6.7	100.0
1956-1961	48.4	30.8	59.9	2.9	6.4	100.0
Male cohort						
1921-1926	46.3	30.9	66.6	1.0	1.5	100.0
1926-1931	46.6	26.4	71.1	0.8	1.7	100.0
1931-1936	46.8	26.8	69.9	0.8	2.5	100.0
1936-1941	46.9	24.8	71.4	0.8	3.0	100.0
1941-1946	46.9	25.2	70.5	0.8	3.5	100.0
1946-1951	46.8	26.9	68.5	0.8	3.8	100.0
1951-1956	46.7	31.4	64.1	0.8	3.7	100.0
1956-1961	46.6	35.2	60.5	0.8	3.5	100.0

Source: PÉRON, Y., LAPIERRE-ADAMCYK, E. et MORISSETTE, D., *Vie conjugale et parentale en mutation: une analyse par cohortes*, Rapport de recherche soumis au Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada, Montréal, Groupe de recherche sur la démographie québécoise, Université de Montréal, 1989, p. 47.

The proportion of years of single life will reach a low with the 1936-1941 cohorts, but will rise to a markedly high level for the 1956-1961 cohorts. For these cohorts, years of single life will represent more than 35% of men's lives and more than 30% of women's – an increase of about 10 points relative to the 1936-1941 cohorts – as first marriages become less frequent and occur at a later age. The years spent single will rise for all ages, but the increase will be more pronounced among the young.

The increase in single years will have a direct bearing on the decline in the years spent in marriage. The proportion of married years will fall below 70% for the baby boom cohorts, and is expected to be about 60% for the 1956-1961 cohorts. Note, however, that the proportion of married years will match less and less the years spent as part of a couple, because of the increase in common-law relationships.

## Increased Extramarital Cohabitation

### An Increase in Unmarried Couples

For a long time, except among Aboriginal peoples, extramarital cohabitation was rare. Since the first half of the 1970s, it has been expanding in Canada, but unmarried couples were only estimated for the first time by the data of the 1981 Census. At that time, almost 357,000 common-law couples already accounted for 6.4% of all couples. Five years later, as estimated in the 1986 Census, they numbered 487,000 and represented 8.3% of all couples. Only 15 years after this form of union became more widespread, nearly 1 million people were living common-law. Most likely the 1991 Census will enumerate twice as many common-law unions.

The majority of common-law unions calculated in 1981 and 1986 were relatively recent for two reasons. First, year after year, common-law union was becoming increasingly popular among those entering a first or new union. Second, the vast majority led rapidly to either marriage or separation. Consequently, the younger a person was at the time of the census, the more likely that the union was recent and had been formed and continued outside of marriage (Table 33). This accounts for the high proportion of common-law unions only among the youngest age groups in 1981. Common-law unions had grown fastest among these groups during the following five years: from 50% to 60% of unions among those aged 15 to 19; and from 23% to 33% among those aged 20 to 24.

TABLE 33. Ratio of Spouses Living in Common-law Unions to All Couples,  
by Age Group, Canada, 1981 and 1986

Age group	1981	1986
15-19	49.5	59.6
20-24	23.1	32.9
25-29	11.3	16.6
30-34	6.8	10.3
35-39	5.1	7.4
40-44	3.9	5.9
45-49	3.0	4.5
50-54	2.4	3.5
55-59	1.8	2.6
60-64	1.5	2.1
65 +	1.0	1.5
Total	6.4	8.3

Source: TURCOTTE, P., "Les unions libres: près d'un demi-million en 1986", *Tendances sociales canadiennes*, no. 10, automne 1988, pp. 35-39.

**TABLE 34. Cohabitation Rate by Age Group and Sex,  
Canada, 1981 and 1986**

Age group	Males		Females	
	1981	1986	1981	1986
15-19	0.7	0.5	3.0	2.4
20-24	9.1	8.5	14.9	15.1
25-29	18.7	20.0	20.8	23.4
30-34	22.5	24.7	19.1	22.9
35-39	22.7	25.1	16.5	19.6
40-44	19.2	23.3	13.4	16.6
45-49	15.5	19.5	10.0	13.3
50-54	11.9	15.8	7.1	9.5
55-59	9.0	11.9	4.5	6.1
60-64	7.0	9.1	2.7	3.8
65 +	3.0	4.3	0.7	1.1
Total	9.5	11.9	8.7	10.7

Source: TURCOTTE, P., "Les unions libres: près d'un demi-million en 1986", *Tendances sociales canadiennes*, no. 10, automne 1988, pp. 35-39.

However, these results do not mean that common-law unions were popular only among the young, as illustrated in Table 34. It provides percentages by age and sex for those living common-law, among the single, separated, divorced or widowed population. It also shows that cohabitation rates peaked among women aged 25 to 40, and among men 30 to 45, suggesting that common-law unions were more popular among the newly separated and newly divorced than among young singles. In spite of the decline in marriages for their group, young singles were also the only ones whose cohabitation rate stagnated between 1981 and 1986, probably because of a tendency to postpone forming first unions.

Table 35 provides a more recent and complete overview of common-law patterns in Canada. Derived from two Statistics Canada surveys on the family taken in 1984 and 1990, it shows the percentages of men or women who had lived common-law at one point in their life, either before or after a marriage. In each survey, percentages first increased with age to peak at 25-29 or 30-34 years. Then, contrary to what would occur within a real cohort, percentages decreased as respondents' age increased. This distribution, surprising at first glance, shows how the acceptance of common-law unions progressed within cohorts.<sup>51</sup> As this practice becomes more commonplace, each cohort finds itself ahead of the previous in the number of common-law unions, but behind the youngest cohorts.

<sup>51</sup> Burch, T.K. (1989) "Common-law unions in Canada: A portrait from the 1984 family history survey" in Légaré, J., Balakrishnan T.R. and Beaujot, R.P. (eds.), *The family in crisis: A population crisis? - Crise de la famille: crise démographique?* Proceedings from a symposium organized by the Federation of Canadian Demographers, University of Ottawa, 1986, Ottawa, Royal Society of Canada 1989, pp. 15-120.

**TABLE 35. Proportion of Persons Living in Common-law, by Age Group and Sex, Canada, 1984 and 1990**

Age group	Females		Males	
	1984	1990	1984	1990
15-19	12	6	3	--
20-24	26	35	17	22
25-29	33	48	29	39
30-34	26	43	26	45
35-39	15	35	17	38
40-44	12	21	12	26
45-49	7	21	8	27
50-54	7	11	10	18
55-59	7	8	5	10
60-64	3	--	5	11
65 +	--	3	--	5
Total	17	23	16	24

Source: Family Survey, 1984, and General Social Survey, 1990.

This illustrates that older cohorts enter into first common-law unions later and less frequently than do younger cohorts. Most people born before the end of the Second World War married before living together became widespread; consequently, very few had lived common law before marriage. For those who did, the first common-law union occurred late and involved essentially people whose marriages had terminated prematurely; in other words, a minority that became increasingly significant and younger from cohort to cohort. On the other hand, more and more people born after the Second World War lived common law before marriage. Their first unions occurred at an earlier age and more frequently since they were no longer linked to marriage breakdown. Common-law living became more prevalent, a fact well illustrated by the 1990 survey, where almost half of women aged 25 to 29 indicated they had already lived common-law (Table 33).

#### The Vanishing Role of Marriage in Early Conjugal Life

Information on the conjugal and parental history of Canadians gathered in the 1990 survey on the family provides a picture of the evolution of first unions for male and female cohorts. Figures 31, 32 and 33 show the results for unions formed before age 30. A few cases, about 2% of the total for women, and 3% for men were omitted where the information was unavailable or incomplete.

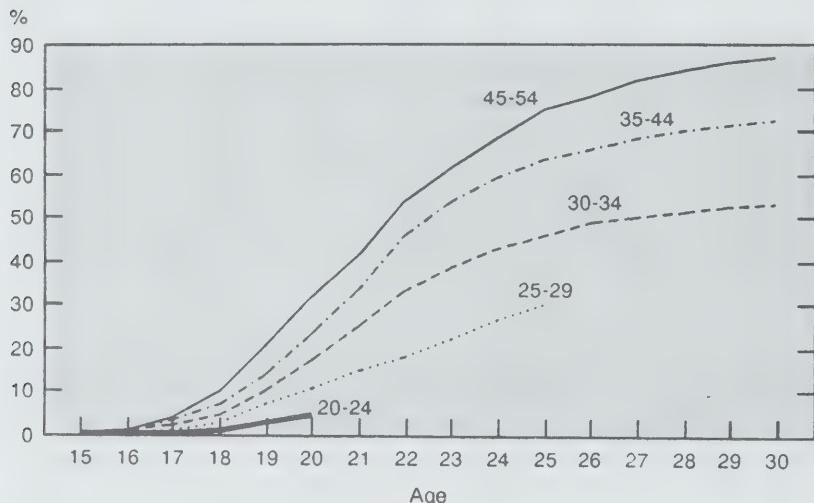
For a long time, Canadians considered marriage necessary to establishing a couple and, accordingly, the first marriage coincided with the beginning of the first union. Table XV provides accumulated percentages for men and women who took this traditional path. For the groups born in the late 1930s and early 1940s, 87% of women and 79% of men chose this route before they reached 30, but fewer and fewer members of subsequent cohorts followed in their footsteps (Figures 31A and 31B). For those born in the early 1960s, the proportion of women who had not previously lived common law and who had married before age 25 fell to 30% from 75% among the eldest cohorts. For men, the proportion fell from 54% to 22%. This decline is even more noteworthy for the proportion married before age 20: from the first to the last cohorts, this proportion went from 32% to 4% among women, and from 8% to 1% among men. With each cohort, marriage tends to become increasingly rare in early conjugal life.

The group born on the eve of or during the Second World War was the last to marry before living common law, as is readily apparent in Figure 32, which shows total percentages of men or women who began conjugal life prior to marriage. The percentages were very low among people aged 45 to 54 at the time of survey, and only became significant after the first post-war cohorts. The first baby boom cohorts reached marriageable age at the same time that modern contraceptive methods became widely available, launching common-law unions among singles, a practice that would become increasingly popular among young people of subsequent cohorts (Figures 32A and 32B). Among groups from the second half of the 1950s, 36% of women and 40% of men lived common law while still single and younger than 30. Even higher proportions are expected for cohorts born during the 1960s, who clearly prefer common-law unions over marriage in early conjugal life (Tables 30 and 31).

One may ask if an acceleration or slow down of the pace at which first unions were formed accompanied this increase. Figures 33A and 33B provide answers to that question. Table 32, which cumulates the percentages in Tables 30 and 31, provides total percentages for men or women ever involved in a first union, whether started as a common-law union or marriage. Among women 30 and older at the time of survey, differences between cohorts are marginal. On the other hand, younger women clearly differ from their elders in that they entered into a union at a later age (Figure 33A). Among men, differences between older cohorts are much more important, probably because of the baby boom's effect on the marriage market. However, it is clear that men in the age group 25 to 29 and 30 to 34 also entered into a union later in life than their elders (Figure 33B). One can conclude that, for the more recent cohorts, the increase in common-law unions among young singles was not sufficient to account for the decline in first marriages considered as the way to enter into conjugal life.

Figure 31A

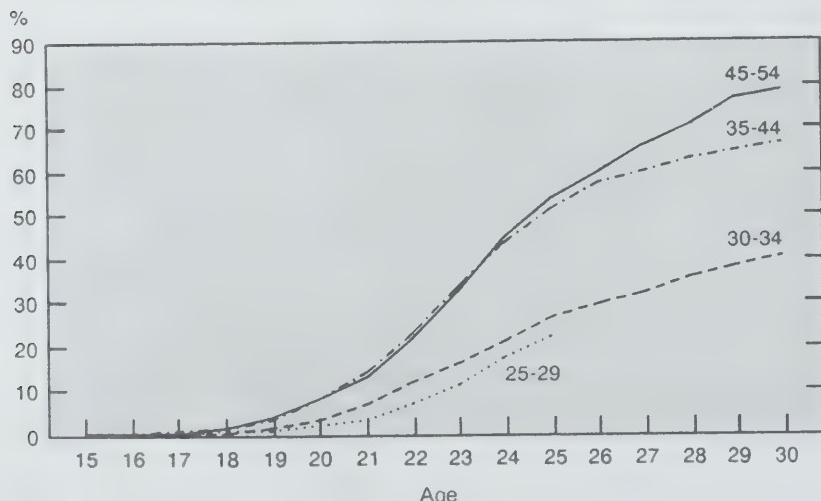
**Cumulated Proportions of Women Having Commenced their Conjugal Life with Marriages, by Age, Canada, 1990**



Source: 1990 General Social Survey, and Table XV.

Figure 31B

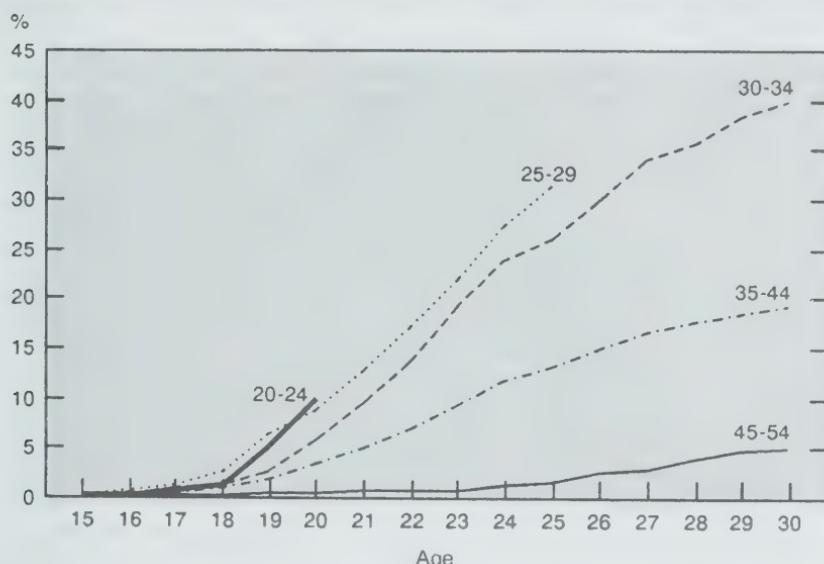
**Cumulated Proportions of Men Having Commenced their Conjugal Life with Marriages, by Age, Canada, 1990**



Source: 1990 General Social Survey, and Table XV.

Figure 32A

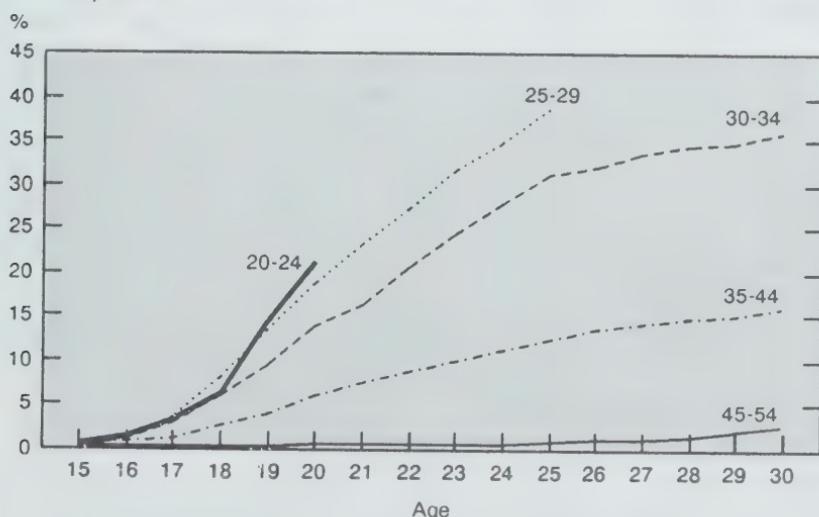
**Cumulated Proportions of Men who Started Living with their Spouse before Marriage, by Age and Age at Survey, Canada, 1990**



Source: Table XVI.

Figure 32B

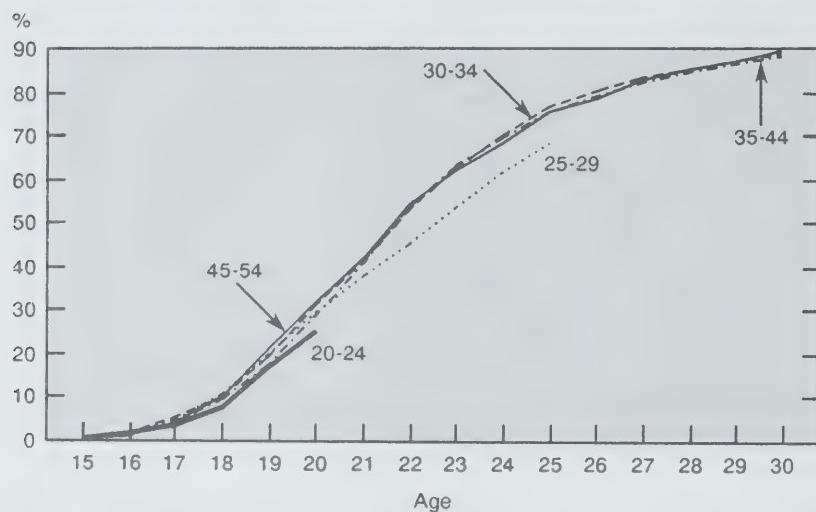
**Cumulated Proportions of Women who Started Living with their Spouse before Marriage, by Age and Age at Survey, Canada, 1990**



Source: Table XVI.

Figure 33A

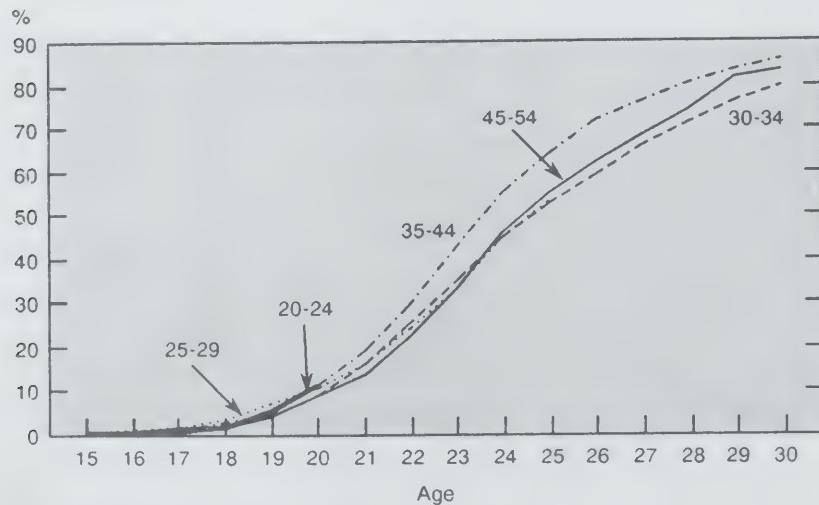
**Cumulated Proportions of Women who Engaged in a First Union  
(Marriage or Common-law Union) by Age and Age at Survey,  
Canada, 1990**



Source: *Table XVII.*

Figure 33B

**Cumulated Proportions of Men who Engaged in a First Union  
(Marriage or Common-law Union) by Age and Age at Survey,  
Canada, 1990**



Source: *Table XVII.*

Canada is not unique in the recent slowdown in forming first unions: other countries, notably the United States<sup>52</sup> and France<sup>53</sup> experienced the same phenomenon. More generalized and longer schooling, particularly among young women, are often cited as likely contributing factors, as are prevailing economic difficulties of the 1980s – youth unemployment and the uncertain nature of the jobs offered. They have all hindered youth's ability to integrate into the professional mainstream and are probably largely responsible for the increased age at which first unions are formed.

### **From Common-law Union to First Marriage**

The 1990 survey on the family provides a realistic picture of marriage among singles who began their conjugal life with a common-law union during the 1970s and early 1980s. Table 33 classifies these singles according to two criteria: when a common-law union was formed, and whether a first marriage was contracted before the survey. Those already married were further divided according to whether they had married their first partner. The never-married were categorized in three groups according to their marital status at the time of the survey: still living with their first partner, living with a new partner, and living without a partner. The time when a common-law union was formed was determined by calculating the difference between the age at the time of the survey and the age at the time of the union. There may have been a few classification errors in cases where the union was formed close to the time of the survey. The results are most telling.

Quite often, the common-law union was merely a prelude to marriage. In fact, slightly more than half the common-law unions formed during the 1970s resulted in marriages between the same partners. Of unions formed during the first half of the 1980s, it appears that fewer will result in marriage, even though more than 40% had been legalized at the time of survey (46% among women and 42% among men). Presumably, marriage is often already planned or expected when the union begins.

Secondly, most singles who lived common-law married either their first partner or another person. According to Table XVIII, this is the case for three out of four people who began a first common-law union during the 1970s. For those who entered such unions during the first half of the 1980s, the proportion at the time of the survey was lower (51% among men and 59% among women), but could also increase by forming or legalizing second unions. Singles stubbornly opposed to marriage remained a minority among those who began their conjugal life living common law.

<sup>52</sup> Bumpass, L.L. and Cherlin, A. (1989) *The role of cohabitation in declining rates of marriage*, Madison, Centre for Demography and Ecology, 35 p. (A national survey of families and households working paper no. 5).

<sup>53</sup> Leridon, H. and Villeneuve-Gokalp, C. (1988) "Les nouveaux couples: nombre, caractéristiques et attitudes", *Population*, 43(2), pp. 331-374.

The third observation is that few singles have lived in common-law with their first partner for very long. Indeed, among those who entered their first union during 1980-1984, only 12% of women and 16% of men were still living common law with their first partner when the survey was taken in 1990. The corresponding proportions were even lower among first unions formed before 1980. In fact, until now, most first common-law unions between singles led quite rapidly to either marriage or separation.

## Conclusion

For the last two decades, the institution of marriage has been in turmoil. Marriage has been less and less a prerequisite to establishing a couple, and has tended to vanish from early conjugal life. Marriage also seems increasingly fragile, as marriage breakdown occurs more frequently and with increasing ease. Nevertheless, marriage still retains a certain appeal among those who had disputed its necessity and its permanency. The majority of singles who had lived common law married eventually and many divorced persons remarried. For these two reasons, Canadians continue to marry, at rates greater than expected, and marriage remains an important part of the conjugal life of Canadian men and women.

However, the situation could worsen during the coming years. Births outside of marriage account for an increasing proportion: from 11% in 1977 to 22% in 1988. This growth would indicate that having children is considered acceptable by more and more couples living common law. Now that the legal distinction between a legitimate and illegitimate child has been eliminated, the main obstacle to having children outside marriage has been removed. Furthermore, financial and social law until now often favoured unmarried couples over married couples.<sup>54</sup> Under these circumstances, common-law unions may become a durable substitute for marriage.

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<sup>54</sup> Morrison, R.J. and Oderkirk, J. (1991) "Married and Unmarried Couples the Tax Question", *Canadian Social Trends*, no. 21, pp. 15-20.

## Overview and conclusion

From the beginning of colonization to the late 1960s, Canadian men and women viewed marriage as a prerequisite to living together and, consequently, most people married. Nevertheless, first marriage rates did not remain consistent during the first 350 years of Canadian history. For example, starting in the 1850s, first marriages occurred much later in life and became less universal than for the generations born between the two World Wars (Chapter 1). Likewise, a significant decline in marriages during the Great Depression was followed by an authentic marriage boom at the start of the Second World War. Interestingly enough, the Second World War ushered in a 30-year “golden age” in Canada’s marriage history (Chapter 2).

Marriage was not only considered necessary to forming a couple, but was also viewed as a lifelong commitment. Most marriages were terminated only by the death of a spouse (Chapter 3). As mortality decreased, early marriage breakdown became less and less probable, and the average duration of unions continued to rise. Married couples in the 1960s could thus expect to live beyond their child-bearing and child-raising years. Of course, this was discounting divorce. Divorce was rare at the time but became increasingly common in the late 1960s.

In fact, it was during the 1970s and 1980s that the plight of marriage began. Following the 1968 Divorce Act, divorce rates climbed rapidly for a few years, then increased slowly until a further rise after the 1985 Act (Chapter 4). Common-law relationships also grew in the early 1970s, and more and more often, conjugal life began outside of marriage (Chapter 6). Thus, the necessity and the indissolubility of marriage was challenged.

While less popular among certain groups, marriage remains a viable institution among others. Thus, all things being equal, divorce rates tend to be much lower in rural areas than in large urban centres. They are also much lower among churchgoers than among non-worshippers (Balakrishnan et al., 1987). Similarly, common-law relationships are less frequent among churchgoers than among non-worshippers. Well-educated people are also less likely to have common-law relationships than are persons with limited education (Rao, 1989). The fact that churchgoers are more traditional is hardly surprising considering that in most religions, marriage is sacred and is therefore almost indissoluble.

However, it should be noted that common-law relationships or divorces were often followed by marriages or remarriages. Thus, among never-married individuals entering common-law relationships during the 1970s, three out of four got married before the end of the 1980s, and quite often to their first partner (Chapter 6). Similarly, many young divorcees remarried. As a result, the total time spent as “married” decreased less than did the duration of marriage itself

(Chapter 6). One reason marriages continued to occur may be that common-law relationships rarely resulted in true "common-law marriages". Few common-law relationships withstood the test of time and most resulted either in marriage or were terminated.

Statistically, partners in unions present diverse characteristics. The choice of a spouse has always been dictated by cultural or economic preferences, and sometimes by demographic constraints. For instance, the ages when people choose to marry, and especially remarry, depend upon the size of the available population. From a cultural viewpoint for instance, new immigrants quite often marry within their own group. In another domain, weddings have not always been, as is almost exclusively the case today, a summer weekend celebration (Chapter 5). Until recently, weddings were distributed differently over the year and also over the week.

Here at the conclusion of this account of the fluctuations and tribulations affecting marriage, the future of the institution seems uncertain. The present erosion in marriage is unparalleled in this nation's history, or more generally, in the Western World, and many sociologists foresee deep changes to come. They do not discard the hypothesis that marriage as an institution might be threatened. Their analysis shows that marriage difficulties are not related to external factors such as the increasing number of women in the labour market, or to the oscillations of the business cycle. Instead, they suggest that people are questioning the very rules governing social life, including the formation of couples, fertility itself and even the concept of family.<sup>55</sup>

In fact, many sociologists believe that the problems affecting the institution of marriage are of a more general nature. The change may represent a total rejection of the major social institutions created throughout history, and a concomitant shift towards the notion of a "pact". The latter is a more private matter between individual partners in a marriage whereas the institution of marriage itself is by its very nature public. One has to admit that little now remains of the norms and regulations formerly imposed by Western Society on the lives of individuals.

From its remote origins, the traditional marital institution was a means of passing assets, real or symbolic, from one generation to another. Satisfaction of spouses counted for very little, and their misfortune was not grounds for breaking their union. This rationale for traditional marriage made divorce virtually impossible. In fact, marriage annulments were almost the only way to terminate a union. The fact that extramarital affairs, no matter how risky, offered a viable and acceptable solution to unhappiness without actually threatening the marriage, is testimony to how the institution was viewed. Divorce only became possible when marriage began to be based on spousal affection

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<sup>55</sup> Roussel, Louis. "Mariages et divorces, contribution à une analyse systématique des modèles matrimoniaux", *Population*, 35(6), November-December, p. 1025-1040.

fulfilment. When such fulfilment no longer existed, the marriage could be questioned and the partners eventually freed to seek a more gratifying union or no union at all. Despite this change in attitude, a large number of divorces did not occur since, among other reasons, the institution of marriage was based on sexual inequality and on very loosely-controlled fertility. The resultant families required support, and society made sure that order was preserved as any disruption would result in disastrous costs. The institution of marriage was also reinforced by the church, which considered the union sacred.

Changes in this domain have eroded these century-old strongholds in the last few decades. One of the most serious blows came from the widespread availability of reliable birth control devices. This triggered a huge decrease in fertility and in family size. Consequently, it contributed greatly to the liberation of women from their ancestral obligations and gave them their economic freedom. The religious bulwark revealed itself to be fragile and unable to keep couples together when they wanted to break their marriage bonds. In only a few years, the institution of marital was called into question, and is now rejected by a growing minority. Thus laws liberalizing divorce were not responsible for increasing marriage breakdown; but rather, they acknowledged legally what could no longer be ignored.

Increasingly, private pacts between partners – that is to say contracts of variable terms which can be questioned at any time by either partner without any social sanction – are favoured over marriages. The general rules that delineated the life cycle, governed the place and length of its stages, and ascribed the roles of individuals, are being rejected.<sup>56</sup>

The effects of these changes on society are far from negligible. Increasing marriage instability combined with decreasing fertility affects society in several ways. For example, more and more adults alternate between conjugal and solo-living periods, and there are fewer children. If a marriage breaks down, even though most of the time they live with either the father or the mother, sometimes children can become isolated from their brothers and sisters. Depending on the fate of their parents, they can be mixed with other children of a different biological origin, and thus regrouped into “blended” families. As many as four generations may coexist nowadays. Since life expectancy is increasing as children grow older, the conflicting time and affection demands between parents and grandchildren is compounded. Moreover, some may have to share their time and affection between step and biological parents.

In this turmoil, certain new social arrangements have emerged and become increasingly clear; for instance, the pre-eminence of the mother-child bond over the father-child bond. At divorce, children are generally entrusted to the care of their mother, and many lose contact with their father after a few years. As

<sup>56</sup> Roussel, Louis. “Les futuribles de la famille”, *Futurable* Avril 1991, n° 153. ISSN 0337 307 X.

a result, a new and unexpected kind of matriarchy appears. This phenomenon is expanding as more couples separate. The figures demonstrate that the social institution is eluded not only for the formation of couples, but also for the constitution of families. More and more children are being born into common-law families.<sup>57</sup> As a consequence, divorce indices increasingly underestimate union breakdowns and the formation of single-parent families.

Some analysts see the continuing disintegration of the family unit as a harbinger of the ultimate triumph of the individual and one of the fundamental characteristics of future society. Others are not so sure.<sup>58</sup> In their view, the evolution of marriage has occurred too swiftly and too recently to conclude that it signals an unequivocal and irreversible trend. In the past, social trends which would seem to make a certain situation inevitable have failed to materialize. Therefore, the same ease with which divorce may be obtained could lead to the erosion of the marriage institution and its disappearance as much as to its increased occurrence, depending on administrative or financial benefits.

Furthermore, future generations may not follow in the steps of previous generations. Without suggesting an eventual return to a utopian and simplistic past, it is conceivable that people living in a troubled and anomie society could seek security in conformity. This compliance could in turn revive institutions like marriage. Some see signs of this in the stability of fertility in several European countries a revived birth rate in Sweden, Canada, the U.S.A. and elsewhere, in divorce rates which have generally stagnated, and in a recent revival of marriages among singles in France, Sweden and Canada.

According to sociologists, these figures could signal the end of the frenzied hedonism of the 1970s, including sexual liberation and the unrestrained pursuit of egocentric happiness. Undoubtedly, the wisdom that the latest generation shows and its serious-minded behaviour cannot be explained solely by fear of AIDS or sexually transmitted diseases, no more than by an awareness of future economic realities. Some who had a difficult childhood or teenage period may aspire to a general order proposed by society and made acceptable in their interest and that of the community.

For the moment, the future is uncertain, but conjugal relations are certainly less formal than they were in the past, and also weaker. They are less conducive to family alliances, as proven by a conspicuous silence about such matters in ordinary conversation. All family relations are disrupted by the contemporary plight of the couple. The fabric of society appears weak, composed of individuals who are silent about their origins and their relationships.

<sup>57</sup> Marcil-Gratton, N. (1988) *Les modes de vie nouveaux des adultes et leur impact sur les enfants au Canada*, Montreal, Groupe de la recherche sur la démographie québécoise, Demography Department, University of Montreal, 54 p., Tabl. (Étude de l'évolution démographique et de son incidence sur la politique économique et sociale, Rapport de recherche).

<sup>58</sup> Sullerot, Evelyne. "La crise de la famille", in Bardot, Jean-Pierre, et Dupâquier, Jacques, *Histoire des populations européennes* - édition Fayard.

## **Appendix A**

### **Sources**

The main problem in restructuring the history of marriage in Canada was obtaining marriage rates by age. Even by using marriage frequencies only, it was necessary to make the denominator the population by calendar year, by sex distribution and by years of age.

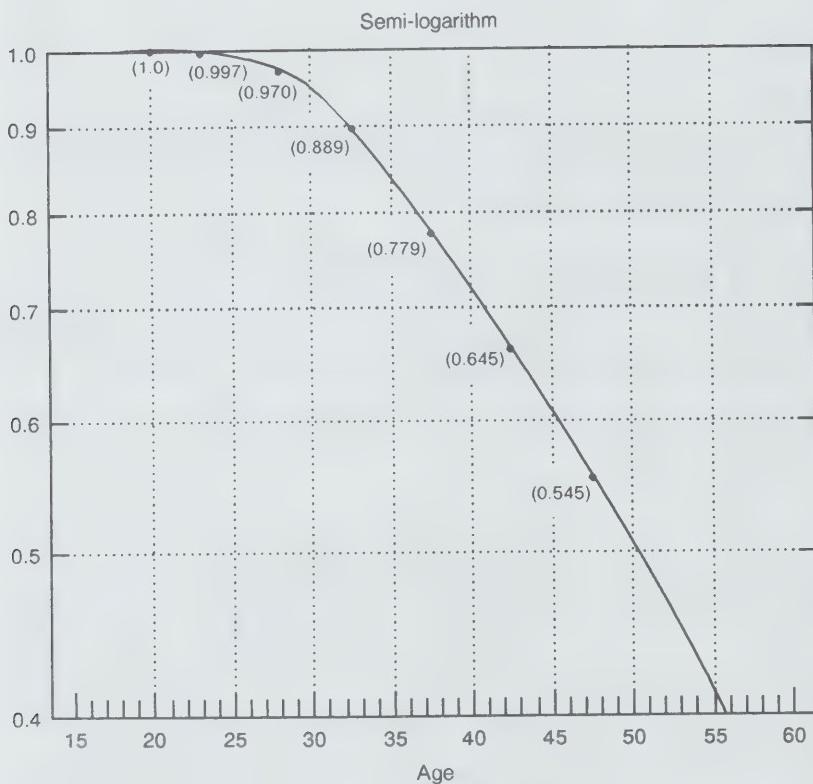
From 1951 to the present, the census has provided population by year of age and sex. The Demography Division at Statistics Canada has also produced some estimates for the years between censuses. For earlier years, population by five-year age groups was interpolated and split with the Sprague multiplier, a process with known drawbacks that may have influenced the results. However, since the objective was to reconstruct trends, errors in detail, even notable ones, were acceptable provided that the reader was advised to take caution when interpreting the results.

Marriages are the numerator. Since 1955, vital statistics have provided an annual count of marriages, by age of both spouses according to their marital status at the time of marriage. For unknown reasons, vital statistics for 1930-1931 and 1932 exist on microfilm. For all other years, only partial information is available: first, the number of marriages by age, with all earlier marital statuses combined; second the number of first marriages (for some years) by five-year groups, or their proportion relative to all marriages. Using a graph, as in Figure "A", proportions of first marriages relative to all marriages were interpolated, and the proportion (derived graphically) at each age applied to marriages, with all statuses combined. The results provide an estimate of marriages of singles.

Since only the total number of marriages is available prior to 1930, proportions of singles by age for that year were applied for each year. Since the vast majority of remarriages at that time involved widowed persons, and because mortality declined from 1920 to 1930, using proportions from 1930 for the 1920s may have slightly overestimated the number of singles and the resulting rate and indexes.

Figure A

**Proportion of First Marriages for Men over All Marriages, 1930**



Note: The numbers between brackets are the proportion per five year periods as provided by Vital Statistics.

## **Appendix B**

### **Table Showing First-marriage Rates**

A table providing the number and distribution-by-age of first marriages (assuming premature death did not prevent any single from marrying) describes the first-marriage rates. The table can illustrate the marriage patterns of singles born during the same period, as presented and commented on in the section . . . . to the marriage of the first French-Canadian cohorts (Chapter 1) or it can describe the behaviour of singles over a year (or other short period). In that case, it becomes a cross-sectional table.

The tables showing marriage rates for certain periods in Canada were calculated by K.G. Basavarajappa (1978), and they chart the behaviour of singles during the three-year period around a census year, from 1941 to 1971. Five-year marriage rates linked to specific ages were calculated and converted into five-year marriage quotients, using the following formula:

$$n = (10 t) / (2 + 5 t)$$

where  $t$  is the rate and  $n$  the quotient.

The same method was used to establish tables of first marriage rates for the three-year period around the census years of 1931, 1976, 1981 and 1986. For the first period, 1930-1932, the data were extracted from an article by Enid Charles (1941). For the three others, data on marriages were taken from annual vital statistics. Except for 1976, the total number of singles differs from the number appearing in census results because the census classifies singles living common law as married. The number of singles in common-law unions was estimated using legal status of persons living common law. Tables appear for the four periods in B1, B2, B3 and B4.

TABLE B-1. Nuptiality Table for Single Females,  
Canada, 1930-1932

Age $x$	Number of singles in 1931	Marriages 1930-1932	Marriage Rate $5_x^m$	Marriage probability $5_x^n$	Singles $C_x$	Marriages $m(x, x+5)$
15	487,733	45,768	0.03128	0.14505	100,000	14,505
20	282,372	87,042	0.10275	0.40875	85,495	34,946
25	121,708	35,763	0.09795	0.39341	50,548	19,886
30	63,580	10,803	0.05664	0.24806	30,662	7,606
35	44,684	4,350	0.03245	0.15008	23,056	3,460
40	33,759	1,923	0.01899	0.09064	19,596	1,776
45	27,099	1,005	0.01236	0.05996	17,820	1,068
50	..	..	..	..	16,751	..

Mean age at first marriage: 25.11

TABLE B-2. Nuptiality Table for Singles,  
Canada, 1975-1977

Age $x$	Number of singles in 1976	Marriages 1975-1977	Marriage Rate $5_x^m$	Marriage probability $5_x^n$	Singles $C_x$	Marriages $m(x, x+5)$
Females						
15	1,054,945	138,598	0.04379	0.19736	100,000	19,736
20	483,545	253,351	0.17465	0.60784	80,264	48,788
25	161,815	66,504	0.13700	0.51203	31,476	16,060
30	73,130	15,902	0.07248	0.30682	15,416	4,730
35	44,430	5,522	0.04143	0.18770	10,686	2,006
40	38,515	2,558	0.02214	0.10489	8,680	910
45	38,600	1,627	0.01405	0.06787	7,770	527
50	..	..	..	..	7,243	..

Mean age at first marriage: 23.47

	Males					
	15	20	25	30	35	40
	1,171,940	38,849	0.01105	0.05376	100,000	5,376
	721,280	264,893	0.12242	0.46866	94,624	44,346
	270,140	124,597	0.15374	0.55529	50,277	27,918
	107,470	30,976	0.09608	0.38735	22,359	8,661
	60,905	9,795	0.05361	0.23636	13,698	3,238
	52,995	4,902	0.03083	0.14313	10,461	1,497
	52,430	3,042	0.01934	0.09224	8,963	827
	..	..	..	..	8,137	..

Mean age at first marriage: 25.75

**TABLE B-3. Nuptiality Table for Singles,  
Canada, 1980-1982**

Age $x$	Number of singles in 1981	Marriages 1980-1982	Marriage Rate $s_x^m$	Marriage probability $s_x^n$	Singles $C_x$	Marriages $m(x, x+5)$
Females						
15	1,089,322	85,668	0.02621	0.12301	100,000	12,301
20	697,174	256,878	0.12282	0.46983	87,699	41,204
25	268,312	87,961	0.10928	0.42915	46,495	19,953
30	123,911	21,863	0.05881	0.25637	26,542	6,805
35	65,325	5,968	0.03045	0.14149	19,737	2,793
40	43,310	2,284	0.01758	0.08419	16,945	1,427
45	37,652	1,237	0.01095	0.05330	15,518	827
50	..	..	..	..	14,691	..

Mean age at first marriage: 24.81

	Males					
15	1,171,235	20,569	0.00585	0.02885	100,000	2,885
20	924,288	229,184	0.08265	0.34249	97,115	33,261
25	413,292	143,440	0.11569	0.44868	63,854	28,650
30	180,099	41,222	0.07630	0.32037	35,204	11,278
35	86,465	11,196	0.04316	0.19479	23,926	4,661
40	56,789	3,844	0.02256	0.10679	19,265	2,057
45	50,183	2,111	0.01402	0.06774	17,208	1,166
50	..	..	..	..	16,042	..

Mean age at first marriage: 27.05

**TABLE B-4. Nuptiality Table for Singles,  
Canada, 1985-1987**

## **Appendix C**

### **Marriage Indexes by Cohort**

In this study, the first marriage rates of Canadian cohorts from 1906 to 1938 are summarized by two indexes:

- a) The cumulated first marriage frequency before age 50 per 1,000 men or 1,000 women;
- b) The mean age at first marriage: calculated by using the cumulated frequencies of first marriages "Summary of marriage timing among singles". The base rates table at the very end of the study shows results before adjustments.

These results contain some anomalies. It is most unlikely that the first marriage rates for two successive cohorts, namely those of 1919 and 1920, would differ so much. It is also doubtful that marriage rates for 1930, 1931 and 1932 were so high that only 1.3% to 2.9% were still single at age 50. These anomalies may result from errors in estimating the population using the Sprague method. This method smooths the population according to age and reduces differences in number between two cohorts in the same group or in two successive groups. As a result, marriage rates for small cohorts are underestimated and those for large cohorts are overestimated.

To correct these anomalies, indexes from the base rates table were replaced by averages calculated on five successive cohorts. Thus, the marriage rate attributed to the 1931 cohort equals the arithmetic average of those for 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932 and 1933. The same process was used to correct the mean age at first marriage. For obvious reasons, indexes for the 1906, 1907, 1937 and 1938 generations were not corrected. The adjusted results appear in Table 10 of the text.

TABLE I. Crude Marriage Rate, Canada, 1921-1988

Year	Crude marriage rate	Year	Crude marriage rate
1921	7.9	1955	8.2
1922	7.2	1956	8.3
1923	7.3	1957	8.0
1924	7.1	1958	7.7
1925	6.9	1959	7.6
1926	7.0	1960	7.3
1927	7.2	1961	7.0
1928	7.5	1962	7.0
1929	7.7	1963	6.9
1930	7.0	1964	7.2
1931	6.4	1965	7.4
1932	5.9	1966	7.8
1933	6.0	1967	8.1
1934	6.8	1968	8.3
1935	7.1	1969	8.7
1936	7.4	1970	8.8
1937	7.9	1971	8.9
1938	7.9	1972	9.2
1939	9.2	1973	9.0
1940	10.8	1974	8.9
1941	10.6	1975	8.7
1942	10.9	1976	8.4
1943	9.4	1977	8.0
1944	8.5	1978	7.9
1945	9.0	1979	7.9
1946	10.9	1980	8.0
1947	10.1	1981	7.8
1948	9.6	1982	7.6
1949	9.2	1983	7.4
1950	9.1	1984	7.4
1951	9.2	1985	7.3
1952	8.9	1986	6.9
1953	8.8	1987	7.1
1954	8.4	1988	7.2

Source: Vital Statistics data, calculations from the authors.

**TABLE II. Total Marriage Rate and Mean Age at First Marriage,  
Canada, 1921-1987**

Year	Females		Males	
	Total marriage rate (per 1,000)	Mean age at first marriage	Total marriage rate (per 1,000)	Mean age at first marriage
1921	924	24.5	876	28.0
1922	851	24.4	847	27.8
1923	871	24.3	844	27.8
1924	832	24.2	812	27.8
1925	813	24.2	897	27.4
1926	794	24.3	806	27.7
1927	813	24.2	843	27.6
1928	847	24.2	867	27.6
1929	864	24.2	879	27.6
1930	777	24.2	789	27.7
1931	720	24.3	714	27.7
1932	660	24.2	653	27.8
1933	666	24.3	665	27.8
1934	754	24.4	758	27.9
1935	786	24.6	791	28.0
1936	815	24.7	833	28.2
1937	873	24.9	897	28.3
1938	878	24.9	895	28.3
1939	1,025	24.9	1,045	28.2
1940	1,212	24.9	1,240	28.2
1941	1,180	24.9	1,200	28.1
1942	1,212	24.9	1,228	28.1
1943	1,012	24.5	1,025	27.7
1944	916	24.6	929	27.8
1945	956	24.4	976	27.5
1946	1,167	24.1	1,200	27.2
1947	1,093	24.0	1,109	27.0
1948	1,057	23.9	1,060	26.9
1949	1,030	23.8	1,034	26.9
1950	1,045	23.6	1,046	26.6
1951	1,080	23.4	1,088	26.3
1952	1,067	23.3	1,060	26.2
1953	1,085	23.2	1,069	26.0
1954	1,040	23.1	1,018	25.9

**TABLE II. Total Marriage Rate and Mean Age at First Marriage,  
Canada, 1921-1987 - Concluded**

Year	Females		Males	
	Total marriage rate (per 1,000)	Mean age at first marriage	Total marriage rate (per 1,000)	Mean age at first marriage
1955	999	23.1	977	25.8
1956	1,065	22.9	1,042	25.7
1957	1,045	22.8	1,022	25.6
1958	1,007	22.7	997	25.5
1959	999	22.7	998	25.4
1960	965	22.6	980	25.4
1961	932	22.6	965	25.3
1962	912	22.5	961	25.2
1963	890	22.5	951	25.2
1964	903	22.6	969	25.2
1965	910	22.6	993	25.2
1966	928	22.6	1,016	25.1
1967	941	22.5	1,024	25.1
1968	931	22.6	1,005	25.1
1969	929	22.7	993	25.1
1970	921	22.7	977	25.1
1971	912	22.6	954	25.0
1972	929	22.5	968	24.9
1973	889	22.6	925	25.0
1974	844	22.7	871	25.0
1975	812	22.8	835	25.1
1976	741	22.9	761	25.3
1977	725	23.1	740	25.4
1978	701	23.2	711	25.5
1979	696	23.3	704	25.6
1980	695	23.5	698	25.7
1981	677	23.7	679	25.9
1982	663	23.9	657	26.1
1983	639	24.1	630	26.3
1984	640	24.4	623	26.6
1985	638	24.5	615	26.8
1986	620	24.7	603	27.0
1987	629	25.0	606	27.3

Source: Vital Statistics data, calculations by the authors.

**TABLE III. Cumulated First Marriage Frequencies, Male Cohorts and Female Cohorts (per 1,000)**

Year	Cohort (to age 26)		Cohort (to age 31)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1938	665.08	806.44	865.37	889.16
1939	672.68	810.62	874.10	893.02
1940	675.53	814.59	876.54	900.93
1941	691.61	836.44	887.66	922.76
1942	691.49	821.84	880.72	908.10
1943	714.89	843.77	900.23	928.70
1944	691.44	814.40	866.98	898.07
1945	662.45	773.79	834.11	854.39
1946	676.97	798.22	851.39	883.00
1947	721.10	862.02	889.50	941.98
1948	680.71	807.70	845.31	890.16
1949	655.60	773.15	819.72	858.53
1950	642.92	760.79	807.59	849.03
1951	620.88	752.53	788.89	844.54
1952	604.10	741.14	775.26	835.96
1953	579.64	730.12	755.51	830.63
1954	560.97	716.82	741.48	821.49
1955	528.58	686.48	712.87	796.50
1956	508.89	669.66	697.81	786.04
1957	492.13	655.18	684.90	776.93
1958	466.56	634.35	...	...
1959	445.97	616.40	...	...
1960	415.57	590.59	...	...
1961	389.55	566.91	...	...
1962	364.61	545.84	...	...

Source: Demography Division, unpublished data.

**TABLE IV. Marriage Dissolution Caused by Death or Divorce, Canada, 1921 to 1986**

Period	Dissolutions per 1,000 marriages					Divorces per 100 dissolutions	Divorced persons per 100 remarriageables		
	Death of a spouse			Divorces	Deaths and divorces				
	Groom	Bride	Total						
1921	10.39	8.36	18.75	0.42	19.17	2.2	4.3		
1930-1932	11.37	8.35	19.72	0.42	20.14	2.1	4.1		
1940-1942	12.24	7.82	20.06	1.13	21.19	5.3	10.1		
1950-1952	11.31	6.10	17.41	1.73	19.14	9.0	16.6		
1955-1957	11.21	5.41	16.62	1.75	18.37	9.5	17.4		
1960-1962	11.27	5.06	16.33	1.68	18.01	9.3	17.1		
1965-1967	11.51	4.95	16.46	2.32	18.78	12.4	22.0		
1970-1972	11.17	4.63	15.80	6.26	22.06	28.4	44.2		
1975-1977	10.46	4.25	14.71	9.71	24.42	39.8	56.9		
1980-1982	10.56	4.35	14.91	11.84	26.75	44.3	61.4		
1985-1987	10.64	4.54	15.18	13.25	28.43	46.6	63.6		

Source: BASA VARAJAPPA, K.G. (1978) *Marital Status and Marriages in Canada* (1971 Census of Canada, Profile Studies) Ottawa, Statistics Canada, p.43, (Catalogue No. 99-704). For deaths and divorces: Vital Statistics. For current marriages: Census of Canada.

TABLE V. Number of Widowhoods and Divorces by Age within a Fictitious Male and Female Cohort, Canada, 1980-1982

Age	Male cohort		Female cohort	
	Widowhood	Divorce	Widowhood	Divorce
15	...	...	...	...
16	...	...	1	...
17	...	...	2	1
18	...	...	6	11
19	...	4	10	46
20	...	17	15	116
21	1	57	23	273
22	2	142	25	479
23	5	283	36	707
24	6	465	39	943
25	8	664	43	1,168
26	11	853	51	1,263
27	15	1,046	51	1,399
28	16	1,202	62	1,409
29	21	1,270	66	1,415
30	26	1,349	67	1,356
31	29	1,347	70	1,330
32	30	1,348	77	1,306
33		1,328	79	1,247
34	29	1,239	80	1,179
35	40	1,313	96	1,231
36	49	1,256	116	1,111
37	48	1,201	115	1,058
38	50	1,136	128	1,032
39	56	1,123	155	1,006
40	66	1,072	170	902
41	74	1,035	178	916
42	80	970	223	841
43	91	938	243	793
44	93	879	290	737
45	107	806	316	673
46	107	793	374	666
47	130	783	404	628
48	121	686	428	548
49	139	645	481	506
50	154	638	508	473

**TABLE V. Number of Widowhoods and Divorces by Age within a Fictitious Male and Female Cohort, Canada, 1980-1982 – Concluded**

Age	Male cohort		Female cohort	
	Widowhood	Divorce	Widowhood	Divorce
51	164	581	569	415
52	207	557	645	393
53	210	489	695	356
54	240	457	736	337
55	260	404	782	288
56	270	357	852	268
57	308	338	896	243
58	324	306	947	221
59	351	264	995	187
60	400	243	1,007	172
61	420	228	1,134	157
62	510	216	1,427	125
63	508	176	1,584	115
64	512	152	1,643	105
65	511	145	1,645	105
66	504	124	1,666	89
67	541	114	1,698	70
68	614	97	1,808	71
69	646	89	1,903	58
70	651	77	1,982	44
71	708	64	2,059	38
72	715	64	2,042	34
73	733	51	2,079	30
74	786	43	2,082	26
75	793	37	2,107	19
76	791	37	2,034	15
77	791	28	1,945	11
78	806	24	1,858	10
79	778	20	1,789	6
80	805	16	1,524	7
81	797	16	1,451	3
82	744	7	1,357	2
83	730	8	1,214	2
84	706	5	1,028	2

Source: ADAMS, O.B. et NAGNUR, D.N. *Marriage, Divorce and Mortality: Analysis of Life Tables, Canada and Regions 1980-1982*, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 1988, p. 51.

**TABLE VI. Marriages Between Two Singles and Other Marriages,  
Canada, 1921 to 1989**

Year	Marriages	Marriages between singles	Other marriages	
			Number	%
1921	51,073	42,416	8,657	17.0
1922	47,811	40,390	7,421	15.5
1923	49,102	42,065	7,037	14.3
1924	47,538	40,805	6,733	14.2
1925	47,217	40,385	6,832	14.5
1926	66,658	58,047	8,611	12.9
1927	69,515	60,585	8,930	12.8
1928	74,311	64,785	9,526	12.8
1929	77,288	67,697	9,591	12.4
1930	71,657	62,655	9,002	12.6
1931	66,591	58,310	8,281	12.4
1932	62,531	54,797	7,734	12.4
1933	63,865	56,411	7,454	11.7
1934	73,092	65,241	7,851	10.7
1935	76,893	69,456	7,437	9.7
1936	80,904	73,506	7,398	9.1
1937	87,800	80,593	7,207	8.2
1938	88,438	81,724	6,714	7.6
1939	103,658	96,503	7,155	6.9
1940	123,318	115,277	8,041	6.5
1941	121,842	113,809	8,033	6.6
1942	127,372	118,522	8,850	6.9
1943	110,937	102,292	8,645	7.8
1944	101,496	90,678	10,818	10.7
1945	108,031	94,877	13,154	12.2
1946	134,088	117,143	16,945	12.6
1947	127,311	109,426	17,885	14.0
1948	123,314	105,634	17,680	14.3
1949	123,877	106,391	17,486	14.1
1950	124,845	108,149	16,696	13.4
1951	128,230	112,023	16,207	12.6
1952	128,301	111,711	16,590	12.9
1953	130,837	114,131	16,706	12.8
1954	128,385	111,906	16,479	12.8
1955	127,777	111,641	16,136	12.6

**TABLE VI. Marriages Between Two Singles and Other Marriages,  
Canada, 1921 to 1989 - Concluded**

Year	Marriages	Marriages between singles	Other marriages	
			Number	%
1956	132 713	116 430	16 283	12,3
1957	133 186	116 844	16 342	12,3
1958	131 525	115 234	16 291	12,4
1959	132 474	115 760	16 714	12,6
1960	130 338	113 801	16 537	12,7
1961	128 475	112 089	16 386	12,8
1962	129 381	113 117	16 264	12,6
1963	131 111	114 357	16 754	12,8
1964	138 135	120 604	17 531	12,7
1965	145 519	127 304	18 215	12,5
1966	155 596	136 181	19 415	12,5
1967	165 879	145 462	20 417	12,3
1968	171 766	150 633	21 133	12,3
1969	182 183	154 689	27 494	15,1
1970	188 428	158 453	29 975	15,9
1971	191 324	159 626	31 698	16,6
1972	200 470	166 888	33 582	16,8
1973	199 064	163 017	36 047	18,1
1974	198 824	159 761	39 063	19,6
1975	197 585	155 285	42 300	21,4
1976	193 343	150 245	43 098	22,3
1977	187 344	142 594	44 750	23,9
1978	185 523	139 269	46 254	24,9
1979	187 811	139 502	48 309	25,7
1980	191 069	140 409	50 660	26,5
1981	190 082	137 742	52 340	27,5
1982	188 360	135 381	52 979	28,1
1983	184 675	130 333	54 342	29,4
1984	185 597	130 161	55 436	29,9
1985	184 096	129 464	54 632	29,7
1986	175 518	122 840	52 678	30,0
1987	182 151	122 133	60 018	32,9
1988	187 728	126 063	61 665	32,8
1989	190 640			

Source: Vital Statistics data.

Table VII. Duration-specific Divorce Rate (per 10,000), Canada, Marriage Cohorts 1943-44 to 1988-89

Year	Number of marriages per calendar year	Marriage cohort	Cohort marriages	Duration of marriage																								Year of observation	T.D.R. <sup>1</sup>		
				0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23				
1944	104,656	1943-44	109,241																									44	1969	1,367	
1945	111,376	1944-45	108,016																									51	50	1970	1,861
1946	137,398	1945-46	124,367																									52	56	1971	1,881
1947	130,400	1946-47	133,899																									48	55	1972	2,004
1948	126,118	1947-48	128,259																									47	56	1973	2,231
1949	124,887	1948-49	125,102																									50	58	1974	2,670
1950	125,083	1949-50	124,585																									51	60	1975	2,932
1951	128,408	1950-51	126,745																									51	64	1976	3,072
1952	128,374	1951-52	128,441																									53	65	1977	3,063
1953	131,034	1952-53	129,754																									54	69	1978	3,108
1954	128,629	1953-54	129,381																									50	74	1979	3,180
1955	128,029	1954-55	128,329																									57	73	1980	3,277
1956	132,213	1955-56	130,371																									59	83	1981	3,529
1957	133,186	1956-57	132,949																									67	82	1982	3,655
1958	131,525	1957-58	132,355																									61	79	1983	3,522
1959	132,474	1958-59	131,999																									68	91	1984	3,306
1960	130,338	1959-60	131,406																									70	93	1985	3,121
1961	128,475	1960-61	129,406																									73	97	1986	3,799
1962	129,381	1961-62	128,928																									71	105	1987	4,314
1963	131,111	1962-63	130,246																									71	114	1988	3,748
1964	138,135	1963-64	134,623																									68	106	1989	3,982
1965	145,519	1964-65	141,827																									61	98		
1966	155,596	1965-66	150,557																									42	93		

Year	Number of marriages per calendar year	Marriage cohort	Cohort marriages	Duration of marriage																								Year of observation	T.D.R. <sup>1</sup>
				0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23		
1967	165,879	1966-67	160,737		31	68	102	126	139	166	177	171	155	145	136	132	130	128	117	105	94	109	118	103	97				
1968	171,766	1967-68	168,823		17	49	75	115	142	162	183	173	165	156	151	136	138	138	117	109	96	112	120	102	108				
1969	182,183	1968-69	176,974		3	22	53	83	122	158	182	184	171	165	160	152	147	144	132	111	103	118	123	105	105				
1970	188,428	1969-70	185,305		3	25	55	92	151	177	192	192	176	174	163	162	157	139	128	112	118	130	106	113					
1971	191,324	1970-71	189,876		4	28	61	106	161	186	189	191	184	180	172	166	150	130	116	125	133	109	113						
1972	200,490	1971-72	195,907		4	33	74	117	174	193	196	197	191	187	185	168	144	125	141	141	119	121							
1973	199,064	1972-73	199,777		5	36	83	129	181	203	212	211	205	204	180	155	135	149	155	125	126								
1974	198,824	1973-74	198,944		5	44	94	136	184	213	226	218	189	168	146	154	163	133	129										
1975	197,585	1974-75	198,205		6	52	104	147	199	243	232	214	185	162	167	177	134	139											
1976	193,341	1975-76	195,464		8	59	111	161	218	249	246	226	193	167	190	184	148	152											
1977	187,344	1976-77	190,343		8	63	116	166	232	250	238	209	180	195	201	163	158												
1978	185,523	1977-78	186,434		7	65	126	175	237	251	220	198	224	224	175	174													
1979	187,811	1978-79	186,667		8	60	135	187	228	225	210	246	245	190	184														
1980	191,059	1979-80	189,440		8	68	137	178	207	212	261	269	206	206															
1981	190,575	1980-81	190,822		9	74	133	154	190	262	285	225	217																
1982	188,360	1981-82	189,468		10	69	120	147	252	294	237	230																	
1983	184,675	1982-83	186,518		9	67	110	202	295	246	246																		
1984	183,597	1983-84	185,136		9	66	145	246	239	252																			
1985	184,096	1984-85	184,846		10	70	197	227	260																				
1986	175,518	1985-86	179,807		10	96	200	264																					
1987	182,151	1986-87	178,835		18	99	216																						
1988	187,728	1987-88	184,940		18	105																							
1989	190,640	1988-89	189,184		19																								

<sup>1</sup>Total divorce index.

TABLE VIII. Total Divorce Rate for First Marriages by Sex and Age at Marriage,  
Canada, 1976 to 1987 (per 10,000)

Year	Age at marriage			
	15-19	20-24	25+	All ages
Males				
1976	5,610	3,312	2,269	3,074
1977	5,479	3,285	2,264	3,058
1978	5,447	3,310	2,383	3,122
1979	5,370	3,410	2,441	3,199
1980	5,534	3,472	2,543	3,290
1981	5,579	3,792	2,795	3,565
1982	5,886	3,885	2,956	3,693
1983	5,478	3,743	2,893	3,557
1984	5,113	3,473	2,758	3,321
1985	4,672	3,322	2,591	3,132
1986	5,671	3,962	3,264	3,792
1987	6,797	4,484	3,741	4,306
Females				
1976	4,404	2,631	1,861	3,048
1977	4,294	2,666	1,920	3,048
1978	4,347	2,731	1,976	3,106
1979	4,385	2,818	2,070	3,178
1980	4,514	2,915	2,096	3,269
1981	4,768	3,220	2,394	3,546
1982	4,926	3,351	2,505	3,670
1983	4,738	3,256	2,443	3,535
1984	4,395	3,057	2,352	3,295
1985	4,143	2,917	2,243	3,106
1986	4,882	3,624	2,810	3,761
1987	5,739	4,091	3,293	4,278

Source: Statistics Canada, unpublished data.

**TABLE IX. Cumulated Probability of Union Dissolution by Duration of Marriage, Female Cohorts First Marriage, 1934-1979, Canada**

Duration of marriage in years	Marriage Cohorts				
	1934-1944	1945-1959	1960-1969	1970-1974	1975-1979
	Divorce				
0	-	-	-	-	-
5	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.09	0.07
10	0.04	0.04	0.12	0.16	-
15	0.06	0.07	0.15	-	-
20	0.08	0.10	0.18	-	-
25	0.09	0.11	-	-	-
30	0.11	0.13	-	-	-
35	0.11	0.14	-	-	-
40	0.11	-	-	-	-
Number	455	1,774	1,445	940	818
	Divorce or separation				
0	-	-	-	-	-
5	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.09	0.12
10	0.05	0.04	0.12	0.19	-
15	0.07	0.08	0.18	-	-
20	0.08	0.11	0.23	-	-
25	0.11	0.15	-	-	-
30	0.12	0.17	-	-	-
35	0.13	0.19	-	-	-
40	0.13	-	-	-	-
Number	455	1,774	1,445	940	818

Source: BURCH, T.K. et MADAN, A.K.(1986), *Union Formation and Dissolution: Results from the 1984 Family History Survey*, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, pp.13-14, (Catalogue No. 99-963).

TABLE X. Seasonal Index of Marriages by Month, Canada (Excluding Quebec), and Quebec,  
1926, 1939, 1945, 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985

Period	1926	1939	1945	1955	1965	1975	1985
	Canada	Quebec	Canada	Quebec	Canada	Quebec	Canada
January	72	71	64	57	45	51	33
February	75	65	66	69	52	64	48
March	65	26	56	27	26	51	23
April	88	98	80	77	83	68	88
May	72	94	81	98	92	102	101
June	145	174	148	169	152	190	145
July	109	138	109	139	116	161	131
August	105	120	108	130	109	145	125
September	126	144	130	158	125	146	133
October	123	131	140	127	128	127	125
November	126	70	123	67	110	58	101
December	95	68	93	85	89	80	85

Source: Calculations by the authors.

**TABLE XI. December Marriage Index and Deviation from the Value of the Trend,  
Quebec, and Canada excluding Quebec, 1977-1988**

Year	Trend value	December
	Quebec	
1977	90	82
1978	90	86
1979	91	88
1980	92	95
1981	93	103
1982	94	113
1983	94	121
1984	94	144
1985	93	185
1986	92	90
1987	91	68
1988	90	64
Canada (without Quebec)		
1977	89	82
1978	89	88
1979	89	89
1980	89	96
1981	89	102
1982	89	103
1983	89	102
1984	89	117
1985	88	132
1986	85	78
1987	84	67
1988	83	61

Source: Calculations by the authors.

**TABLE XII. Deseasonnalized Monthly Marriage Indices by Sex  
(logarithmic values)**

Months	Year						
	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Canada (without Quebec)							
January	5,005	7,369	6,873	8,183	7,403	6,022	5,612
February	4,964	7,255	6,923	8,279	7,304	5,975	5,650
March	4,964	7,198	7,020	8,307	7,142	5,919	5,747
April	5,004	7,227	7,128	8,265	6,920	5,866	5,887
May	5,111	7,326	7,241	8,147	6,678	5,831	6,044
June	5,348	7,447	7,333	7,972	6,457	5,812	6,205
July	5,762	7,518	7,414	7,790	6,275	5,791	6,353
August	6,291	7,494	7,505	7,630	6,143	5,766	6,470
September	6,802	7,376	7,619	7,522	6,073	5,730	6,559
October	7,203	7,205	7,739	7,476	6,051	5,687	6,629
November	7,421	7,030	7,876	7,468	6,054	5,646	6,682
December	7,454	6,908	8,034	7,452	6,052	5,617	6,709
Quebec							
January	2,144	3,006	2,381	3,067	3,050	2,435	2,420
February	2,101	2,983	2,420	3,078	3,041	2,447	2,443
March	2,057	2,976	2,483	3,018	3,016	2,486	2,507
April	2,030	2,977	2,558	2,894	2,987	2,549	2,605
May	2,037	2,950	2,628	2,750	2,954	2,626	2,716
June	2,135	2,882	2,684	2,634	2,900	2,698	2,813
July	2,333	2,785	2,716	2,586	2,818	2,747	2,868
August	2,575	2,680	2,732	2,624	2,719	2,753	2,875
September	2,789	2,578	2,764	2,723	2,618	2,705	2,854
October	2,935	2,484	2,825	2,844	2,542	2,615	2,813
November	3,012	2,408	2,910	2,954	2,490	2,519	2,766
December	3,028	2,369	3,000	3,026	2,455	2,446	2,704

Source: Calculations by Pierre Cholette, Time Series, Research and Analysis Division.

**TABLE XIII.** Total Marriage Rate for Single Males, Canada, 1953-1989,  
and Unemployment Rate for Males Aged 20 to 24,<sup>1</sup> Canada,  
1953-1991

Year	Total first marriage rate (per 1,000)	Unemployment rate	
		Old series	New series <sup>2</sup>
1953	1,068.62	5.0	...
1954	1,017.55	7.8	...
1955	977.42	7.2	...
1956	1,042.02	5.8	...
1957	1,021.71	8.3	...
1958	996.65	12.7	...
1959	998.44	10.7	...
1960	979.86	12.4	...
1961	965.10	12.0	...
1962	960.86	10.1	...
1963	951.20	9.7	...
1964	969.35	8.0	...
1965	992.65	5.8	...
1966	1,016.43	5.3	...
1967	1,023.61	6.1	...
1968	1,005.31	7.6	...
1969	992.89	7.4	...
1970	977.27	10.1	8.8
1971	954.20	11.4	9.4
1972	968.34	11.5	9.6
1973	925.18	10.0	8.3
1974	870.71	9.4	7.8
1975	835.36	12.6	10.5
1976	760.70	...	11.2
1977	739.80	...	12.7
1978	711.29	...	12.8
1979	703.75	...	11.2
1980	698.08	...	11.5
1981	679.06	...	12.4
1982	656.93	...	10.9
1983	630.13	...	21.3
1984	622.89	...	18.2
1985	615.48	...	16.8
1986	603.05	...	15.4
1987	605.70	...	13.8
1988	626.90	...	12.0
1989	641.90	...	11.0
1990	..	...	11.0
1991	..	...	13.4

<sup>1</sup> Average of monthly rates.

<sup>2</sup> Due to a change in methodology the series are not compatible.

Source: Cansim 001800 Monthly Labour Force Survey Group.

**TABLE XIV-A. Total Number of Marriages Among Singles by Age of Groom,  
Distribution per 1,000, and Average Age of the Bride, Canada, 1987**

Age of groom	Number of marriages	Distribution per 1,000	Average age of bride	Age difference (bride - groom)
17	126	1.03	18.31	1.3
18	564	4.62	18.74	0.7
19	1,628	13.34	19.34	0.3
20	3,519	28.83	20.12	0.1
21	6,492	53.19	20.84	-0.2
22	9,991	81.85	21.50	-0.5
23	13,170	107.90	22.15	-0.9
24	14,381	117.82	22.83	-1.2
25	13,829	113.30	23.44	-1.6
26	11,896	97.46	24.04	-2.0
27	10,310	84.47	24.67	-2.3
28	8,020	65.71	25.27	-2.7
29	6,556	53.71	25.89	-3.1
30	5,100	41.78	26.37	-3.6
31	3,842	31.48	26.89	-4.1
32	2,890	23.68	27.46	-4.5
33	2,261	18.52	28.11	-4.9
34	1,619	13.26	28.42	-5.6
35	1,256	10.29	29.18	-5.8
36	1,003	8.22	29.81	-6.4
37	719	5.89	30.11	-6.9
38	580	4.75	30.72	-7.3
39	427	3.50	30.96	-8.0
40	357	2.92	32.31	-7.7
41	230	1.88	32.07	-8.9
42	193	1.58	33.23	-8.8
43	156	1.28	34.04	-9.0
44	124	1.02	35.23	-8.8
45	87	0.71	34.85	-10.2
46	61	0.50	33.59	-12.4
47	72	0.59	37.26	-9.7
48	42	0.34	38.38	-9.6
49	43	0.35	38.16	-10.8
50	31	0.25	39.45	-10.6
51	43	0.35	40.70	-10.3
52	30	0.25	37.73	-14.3
53	23	0.19	39.43	-13.6
54	35	0.29	41.37	-12.6
55	22	0.18	41.36	-13.6
56	17	0.14	42.18	-13.8
57	22	0.18	43.14	-13.9
58	15	0.12	39.67	-18.3
59	18	0.15	50.33	-8.7
60	11	0.09	52.09	-7.9
61	22	0.18	49.45	-11.6
62	9	0.07	50.44	-11.6
63	19	0.16	56.16	-6.8
64	10	0.08	46.70	-17.3
65	7	0.06	59.14	-5.9
66	1	0.01	50.00	-16.0
67	7	0.06	49.29	-17.7
68	5	0.04	53.20	-14.8
69	3	0.02	51.67	-17.3
70	165	1.35	29.39	-40.6
Total	122,059			

Source: Vital Statistics data.

**TABLE XIV-B. Distribution of Marriages Among Singles and Age Difference Between Spouses, Canada, 1977**

Age of groom	Distribution per 1,000	Age difference (bride - groom)
18	21.3	0.2
19	52.2	-0.3
20	92.7	-0.6
21	122.6	-1.0
22	131.6	-1.3
23	122.0	-1.7
24	101.7	-2.2
25	83.1	-2.6
26	64.6	-3.0
27	48.8	-3.4
28	37.8	-3.9
29	28.1	-4.4
30	21.9	-4.9
31	14.4	-5.4
32	10.2	-5.7
33	8.0	-6.2
34	5.9	-6.5
35	4.6	-7.4
36	3.6	-7.6
37	2.9	-8.1
38	2.4	-8.9
39	1.7	-8.9
40	1.4	-8.6
41	1.2	-8.7
42	1.1	-9.6
Total	985.9	

Source: Vital Statistics data.

**TABLE XIV-C. Number of Marriages and Age Distribution of Spouses Among Marriages involving a Divorced Male and Single Female, Canada, 1987**

Age of groom	Number of marriages	Distribution per 1,000	Average age of bride	Age difference (bride - groom)
17	1	0.06	25.00	8.0
18	1	0.06	33.00	15.0
19	3	0.18	23.00	4.0
20	9	0.55	25.33	5.3
21	32	1.96	26.31	5.3
22	72	4.42	24.78	2.8
23	127	7.80	24.45	1.5
24	246	15.10	25.06	1.1
25	376	23.08	24.76	-0.2
26	544	33.39	25.21	-0.8
27	766	47.02	25.42	-1.6
28	830	50.95	25.91	-2.1
29	960	58.93	26.15	-2.9
30	996	61.14	26.57	-3.4
31	1,004	61.63	26.86	-4.1
32	1,006	61.75	27.43	-4.6
33	1,013	62.18	27.83	-5.2
34	919	56.41	28.00	-6.0
35	871	53.47	28.63	-6.4
36	739	45.36	28.79	-7.2
37	748	45.91	29.38	-7.6
38	693	42.54	29.64	-8.4
39	614	37.69	30.38	-8.6
40	573	35.17	30.62	-9.4
41	433	26.58	30.73	-10.3
42	377	23.14	31.64	-10.4
43	307	18.84	32.21	-10.8
44	291	17.86	32.85	-11.2
45	222	13.63	33.45	-11.6
46	200	12.28	34.13	-11.9
47	185	11.36	35.19	-11.8
48	160	9.82	35.04	-13.0
49	123	7.55	34.81	-14.2
50	105	6.45	36.21	-13.8
51	107	6.57	36.07	-14.9
52	77	4.73	37.49	-14.5
53	79	4.85	38.94	-14.1
54	61	3.74	39.89	-14.1
55	51	3.13	40.37	-14.6
56	50	3.07	39.18	-16.8
57	40	2.46	41.33	-15.7
58	33	2.03	41.64	-16.4
59	42	2.58	41.24	-17.8
60	26	1.60	41.69	-18.3
61	30	1.84	43.70	-17.3
62	26	1.60	40.46	-21.5
63	27	1.66	48.00	-15.0
64	19	1.17	47.89	-16.1
65	21	1.29	51.52	-13.5
66	4	0.25	41.75	-24.3
67	9	0.55	50.56	-16.4
68	5	0.31	36.80	-31.2
69	6	0.37	56.17	-12.8
70	32	1.96	49.03	-21.0
Total	16,291			

Source: Vital Statistics data.

**TABLE XIV-D. Age Distribution of Spouses Among Marriages Involving a Divorced Male and a Single Female, Canada 1977**

Age of groom	Distribution per 1,000	Age difference (bride - groom)
18	0.2	- 0.5
19	0.2	1.4
20	0.4	- 0.4
21	1.1	- 0.8
22	3.3	- 1.4
23	9.0	- 2.0
24	17.0	- 2.4
25	25.9	- 2.7
26	35.2	- 3.5
27	47.5	- 4.0
28	61.6	- 4.2
29	66.7	- 5.0
30	71.0	- 5.5
31	75.8	- 6.0
32	62.8	- 6.4
33	55.9	- 7.1
34	52.4	- 7.8
35	47.6	- 8.4
36	44.0	- 8.8
37	34.8	- 9.1
38	30.6	- 10.3
39	28.9	- 10.4
40	25.3	- 10.5
41	19.9	- 10.1
42	18.8	- 11.1
43	17.9	- 11.8
44	14.5	- 11.7
45	14.5	- 12.4
46	12.5	- 13.7
47	13.2	- 13.2
48	12.4	- 12.4
49	9.5	- 14.2
50	9.5	- 14.9
51	6.2	- 15.0
Total	945.7	

Source: Vital Statistics data.

**TABLE XIV-E. Number of Marriages and Age Distribution of Spouses Among Marriages involving a Single Male and a Divorced Female, Canada, 1987**

Age of groom	Number of marriages	Distribution per 1,000	Average age of bride	Age difference (bride - groom)
17	3	0.20	31.33	14.3
18	9	0.60	26.78	8.8
19	31	2.06	26.81	7.8
20	88	5.86	27.42	7.4
21	177	11.79	27.12	6.1
22	322	21.44	26.99	5.0
23	518	34.49	27.27	4.3
24	662	44.08	27.79	3.8
25	799	53.20	28.25	3.3
26	940	62.59	28.47	2.5
27	1,032	68.71	29.25	2.3
28	1,050	69.91	29.50	1.5
29	1,069	71.18	29.87	0.9
30	1,021	67.98	30.28	0.3
31	897	59.72	30.63	-0.4
32	834	55.53	31.23	-0.8
33	666	44.34	31.55	-1.5
34	628	41.81	31.87	-2.1
35	568	37.82	32.52	-2.5
36	480	31.96	32.45	-3.6
37	393	26.17	33.27	-3.7
38	355	23.64	34.75	-3.3
39	320	21.31	34.67	-4.3
40	310	20.64	34.58	-5.4
41	236	15.71	34.86	-6.1
42	178	11.85	36.39	-5.6
43	150	9.99	36.67	-6.3
44	156	10.39	36.29	-7.7
45	129	8.59	36.74	-8.3
46	121	8.06	37.64	-8.4
47	107	7.12	39.31	-7.7
48	69	4.59	39.94	-8.1
49	75	4.99	39.57	-9.4
50	64	4.26	39.59	-10.4
51	53	3.53	40.13	-10.9
52	57	3.80	41.88	-10.1
53	52	3.46	45.04	-8.0
54	42	2.80	46.05	-8.0
55	41	2.73	44.80	-10.2
56	22	1.46	42.82	-13.2
57	27	1.80	42.70	-14.3
58	38	2.53	46.08	-11.9
59	29	1.93	48.90	-10.1
60	24	1.60	51.79	-8.2
61	18	1.20	47.44	-13.6
62	22	1.46	50.14	-11.9
63	17	1.13	54.06	-8.9
64	15	1.00	53.67	-10.3
65	13	0.87	49.62	-15.1
66	7	0.47	48.57	-17.4
67	9	0.60	50.78	-16.2
68	4	0.27	52.75	-15.3
69	6	0.40	51.00	-18.0
70	66	4.39	38.17	-31.8
Total	15,019			

Source: Vital Statistics data.

**TABLE XIV-F. Age Distribution of the Spouses Among Marriages Involving a Divorced Male and a Divorced Female, Canada, 1977**

Age of groom	Distribution per 1,000	Age difference (bride - groom)
17	0.2	5.0
18	1.3	3.0
19	4.7	3.7
20	11.1	2.9
21	23.9	3.3
22	35.6	2.6
23	47.5	2.3
24	61.9	1.5
25	70.6	1.3
26	71.5	0.8
27	77.4	0.6
28	72.8	0.2
29	75.6	0.6
30	64.8	-1.0
31	50.9	-1.2
32	39.6	-1.5
33	37.1	-1.4
34	32.8	-1.8
35	25.7	-2.7
36	23.0	-3.3
37	19.7	-2.2
38	16.4	-2.9
39	14.1	-3.0
40	11.4	-2.2
41	10.1	-0.4
42	10.5	-2.4
43	9.4	-3.7
44	10.3	-2.1
45	8.3	-1.5
46	6.8	-1.9
47	7.4	-2.6
48	6.8	-4.3
49	5.2	-4.2
50	4.6	-1.9
51	4.6	-3.2
Total	973.7	

Source: Vital Statistics data.

TABLE XIV-G. Number of Marriages and Age Distribution of Spouses Among Marriages Involving a Divorced Male and a Divorced Female, Canada, 1977

Age of groom	Number of marriages	Distribution per 1,000	Average age of bride	Age difference (bride - groom)
17	-	-	-	-
18	-	-	-	-
19	-	-	-	-
20	-	-	-	-
21	2	0.10	36.00	15.0
22	12	0.62	25.33	3.3
23	16	0.82	28.06	5.1
24	55	2.83	27.31	3.3
25	75	3.86	27.53	2.5
26	136	7.00	27.88	1.9
27	215	11.07	28.59	1.6
28	333	17.14	29.44	1.4
29	377	19.41	30.24	1.2
30	501	25.79	30.84	0.8
31	516	26.56	31.46	0.5
32	669	34.44	31.48	-0.5
33	703	36.19	32.16	-0.8
34	823	42.37	32.65	-1.4
35	831	42.78	33.59	-1.4
36	828	42.62	33.78	-2.2
37	811	41.75	34.63	-2.4
38	847	43.60	35.22	-2.8
39	892	45.92	35.90	-3.1
40	1,016	52.30	36.47	-3.5
41	800	41.18	37.31	-3.7
42	752	38.71	37.61	-4.4
43	736	37.89	38.17	-4.8
44	737	37.94	39.01	-5.0
45	610	31.40	40.09	-4.9
46	618	31.81	39.97	-6.0
47	576	29.65	40.45	-6.6
48	498	25.64	40.65	-7.4
49	477	24.55	42.27	-6.7
50	454	23.37	42.95	-7.1
51	407	20.95	43.35	-7.7
52	370	19.05	43.88	-8.1
53	302	15.55	44.78	-8.2
54	334	17.19	45.78	-8.2
55	283	14.57	46.70	-8.3
56	287	14.77	46.59	-9.4
57	230	11.84	46.93	-10.1
58	174	8.96	47.60	-10.4
59	189	9.73	48.53	-10.5
60	158	8.13	49.87	-10.1
61	127	6.54	50.84	-10.2
62	116	5.97	50.60	-11.4
63	117	6.02	51.17	-11.8
64	103	5.30	51.87	-12.1
65	60	3.09	52.93	-12.1
66	52	2.68	54.85	-11.2
67	41	2.11	55.10	-11.9
68	35	1.80	54.97	-13.0
69	22	1.13	53.09	-15.9
70	103	5.30	53.30	-16.7
Total	19,426			

Source: Vital Statistics data.

**TABLE XIV-H. Age Distribution of Spouses Among Marriages Involving a Divorced Male and a Divorced Female, Canada, 1977**

Age of groom	Distribution per 1,000	Age difference (bride - groom)
20	0.3	1.0
21	0.5	2.5
22	1.9	3.0
23	2.9	2.9
24	7.5	2.0
25	10.2	1.8
26	15.7	0.7
27	24.1	0.9
28	30.0	0.0
29	36.8	-0.1
30	47.6	-0.9
31	40.3	-1.1
32	41.3	-1.5
33	39.9	-1.9
34	47.5	-2.4
35	40.3	-2.7
36	38.0	-3.5
37	41.0	-3.7
38	38.9	-4.2
39	35.6	-4.5
40	35.0	-4.6
41	35.0	-4.2
42	32.1	-4.8
43	28.8	-5.2
44	30.4	-5.9
45	27.8	-6.2
46	29.4	-6.5
47	22.9	-6.4
48	23.9	-7.0
49	23.8	-6.4
50	20.3	-6.7
51	19.6	-7.7
52	16.9	-7.7
53	15.0	-8.6
54	14.1	-6.7
55	12.1	-8.2
56	12.3	-9.1
Total	939.6	

Source: Vital Statistics data.

TABLE XIV-I. Number and Age Distribution (Groom as Reference) of Partners in Marriages Involving a Widower Regardless of the Civil Status of the Bride, Canada, 1987

Age of groom	Number of marriages	Distribution per 1,000	Average age of bride	Age difference (bride - groom)
17	-	-	-	-
18	-	-	-	-
19	-	-	-	-
20	1	0.20	44.00	24.0
21	-	-	-	-
22	-	-	-	-
23	4	0.79	30.50	7.5
24	10	1.98	24.90	0.9
25	9	1.78	30.00	5.0
26	15	2.97	27.53	1.5
27	16	3.17	32.06	5.1
28	22	4.36	30.68	2.7
29	26	5.15	29.81	0.8
30	28	5.55	29.36	-0.6
31	32	6.34	31.31	0.3
32	43	8.52	31.44	-0.6
33	36	7.14	31.50	-1.5
34	54	10.70	31.85	-2.2
35	44	8.72	32.61	-2.4
36	45	8.92	32.91	-3.1
37	35	6.94	33.89	-3.1
38	52	10.31	34.38	-3.6
39	50	9.91	35.06	-3.9
40	56	11.10	36.00	-4.0
41	71	14.07	36.73	-4.3
42	57	11.30	39.14	-2.9
43	65	12.88	39.77	-3.2
44	68	13.48	40.07	-3.9
45	81	16.06	39.51	-5.5
46	76	15.06	40.82	-5.2
47	78	15.46	41.06	-5.9
48	90	17.84	42.44	-5.6
49	89	17.64	43.29	-5.7
50	93	18.43	44.66	-5.3
51	100	19.82	45.03	-6.0
52	95	18.83	47.24	-4.8
53	129	25.57	47.78	-5.2
54	112	22.20	48.21	-5.8
55	140	27.75	48.54	-6.5
56	151	29.93	50.99	-5.0
57	152	30.13	50.66	-6.3
58	136	26.96	52.20	-5.8
59	155	30.72	51.71	-7.3
60	179	35.48	53.74	-6.3
61	188	37.26	55.84	-5.2
62	182	36.08	55.21	-6.8
63	177	35.08	56.54	-6.5
64	182	36.08	56.32	-7.7
65	194	38.45	58.11	-6.9
66	196	38.85	59.02	-7.0
67	157	31.12	60.14	-6.9
68	135	26.76	59.52	-8.5
69	113	22.40	61.35	-7.7
70	826	163.73	62.13	-7.9
Total	5,045			

Source: Vital Statistics data.

**TABLE XIV-J. Age Distribution of Spouses Among Marriages Involving a Widower Regardless of the Civil Status of the Bride, Canada, 1977**

Age of groom	Distribution per 1,000	Age difference (bride - groom)
23	1.3	- 1.5
24	2.6	- 0.9
25	2.9	- 2.1
26	4.7	- 2.7
27	4.8	- 1.9
28	4.5	- 3.8
29	5.2	- 3.4
30	5.2	- 3.9
31	7.4	- 4.3
32	6.6	- 4.4
33	6.9	- 3.5
34	6.3	- 6.2
35	6.4	- 5.8
36	8.1	- 5.4
37	9.0	- 5.4
38	8.5	- 5.5
39	9.3	- 5.1
40	7.2	- 7.2
41	8.1	- 7.3
42	10.3	- 7.2
43	11.1	- 5.7
44	13.8	- 5.9
45	14.7	- 4.7
46	13.0	- 4.9
47	15.6	- 6.2
48	17.1	- 6.9
49	21.3	- 7.0
50	20.1	- 6.0
51	21.9	- 4.3
52	19.8	- 5.3
53	23.2	- 5.7
54	23.3	- 4.9
55	25.0	- 5.7
56	27.0	- 6.0
57	29.6	- 6.3
58	21.9	- 5.2
59	27.9	- 5.5
60	29.5	- 5.3
61	26.9	- 6.1
62	29.1	- 6.3
63	32.4	- 5.8
64	33.5	- 6.9
65	38.3	- 6.1
66	32.8	- 6.4
67	32.4	- 5.3
68	27.4	- 6.6
69	28.8	- 6.2
70 to 79	176.0	...
80 to 98	35.3	...
99	5.8	...
Total	78.3	

Source: Vital Statistics data.

TABLE XV. Cumulated Proportions of Men and Women Having Commenced their Conjugal Life with Marriages, by Age, Canada, 1990

Age	Age at the time of survey				
	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-54
	Females				
15	-	-	-	0.2	0.1
16	-	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.9
17	0.2	0.9	2.0	3.0	3.6
18	0.9	2.5	4.1	6.5	9.8
19	2.7	6.6	9.6	13.5	20.3
20	4.1	10.5	17.3	22.9	31.6
21	...	14.6	24.9	33.6	41.6
22	...	17.6	32.6	45.4	53.7
23	...	21.9	38.4	53.6	61.6
24	...	26.4	42.3	58.7	67.9
25	...	29.7	45.5	63.1	74.6
26	...	...	48.4	65.7	77.8
27	...	...	50.0	68.0	81.6
28	...	...	50.9	69.7	84.1
29	...	...	52.5	71.4	85.6
30	...	...	53.1	72.4	87.1
N	639	762	764	1,316	901
	Males				
15	-	-	-	-	0.1
16	-	-	-	-	0.1
17	-	-	0.1	0.5	0.2
18	-	0.4	0.3	1.5	1.0
19	0.3	0.7	1.2	2.9	3.6
20	0.9	1.7	3.1	7.7	7.9
21	...	3.3	6.7	13.9	12.8
22	...	6.7	11.3	22.2	21.4
23	...	11.0	15.8	33.6	32.1
24	...	17.2	20.6	43.3	44.4
25	...	21.7	26.2	51.1	53.7
26	...	...	29.2	57.2	59.7
27	...	...	31.8	59.4	65.6
28	...	...	35.3	62.6	70.5
29	...	...	37.9	64.7	76.5
30	...	...	40.0	66.4	78.6
N	662	757	733	1,290	868

Source: 1990 General Social Survey.

TABLE XVI. Cumulated Proportions of Men and Women who Started Living Together Before Marriage, by Age, Canada, 1990

Age	Age at the time of survey				
	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-54
	Females				
15	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0
16	1.3	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.0
17	3.0	3.4	2.7	0.8	0.1
18	6.1	7.9	5.9	2.4	0.1
19	14.1	13.0	9.2	3.6	0.1
20	21.0	18.4	13.7	5.8	0.2
21	...	23.1	16.2	7.4	0.3
22	...	27.2	20.3	8.4	0.4
23	...	31.6	24.2	9.6	0.4
24	...	34.8	27.6	10.8	0.4
25	...	38.7	30.9	12.2	0.7
26	...	...	31.9	13.5	0.8
27	...	...	33.4	14.0	1.0
28	...	...	34.3	14.7	1.2
29	...	...	34.6	15.0	1.7
30	...	...	35.9	15.7	2.3
N	639	762	764	1,316	901
	Males				
15	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0
16	0.0	0.5	0.1	0.2	0.0
17	0.6	1.2	0.8	0.4	0.1
18	1.1	2.4	1.1	0.9	0.1
19	4.8	6.2	2.5	1.6	0.2
20	9.8	8.7	5.6	3.1	0.3
21	...	12.7	9.3	4.9	0.5
22	...	17.0	13.6	6.7	0.5
23	...	21.8	19.0	9.1	0.6
24	...	27.3	23.7	11.5	1.0
25	...	31.2	25.8	12.8	1.3
26	...	...	29.9	14.7	2.5
27	...	...	34.0	16.4	2.6
28	...	...	35.7	17.4	3.7
29	...	...	38.3	18.4	4.7
30	...	...	39.8	19.1	4.8
N	662	757	733	1,290	868

Source: 1990 General Social Survey.

TABLE XVII. Cumulated Proportions of Men and Women who Engaged in a First Union (Marriage or Common-law Union) by Age, Canada, 1990

Age	Age at the time of survey				
	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-54
	Females				
15	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.1
16	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.0	0.9
17	3.1	4.3	4.7	3.7	3.7
18	7.0	10.4	9.9	8.9	9.9
19	16.7	19.6	18.7	17.2	20.4
20	25.0	28.9	31.0	28.6	31.9
21	...	37.7	41.1	41.0	42.0
22	...	44.8	52.9	53.8	54.2
23	...	53.5	62.6	63.2	62.0
24	...	61.2	69.9	69.5	68.4
25	...	68.4	76.4	75.3	75.2
26	...	...	80.4	79.3	78.6
27	...	...	83.4	82.0	82.6
28	...	...	85.2	84.4	85.3
29	...	...	87.0	86.3	87.2
30	...	...	89.0	88.1	89.5
N	639	762	764	1,316	901
	Males				
15	-	0.1	-	0.1	0.1
16	-	0.5	0.1	0.2	0.1
17	0.6	1.2	1.0	0.9	0.3
18	1.1	2.8	1.4	2.4	1.2
19	5.1	6.9	3.7	4.4	3.8
20	10.7	10.4	8.7	10.8	8.3
21	...	16.0	16.0	18.8	13.2
22	...	23.8	25.0	28.9	21.9
23	...	32.8	34.8	42.6	32.7
24	...	44.5	44.3	54.7	45.4
25	...	52.8	52.0	63.9	55.0
26	...	...	59.1	71.9	62.2
27	...	...	65.8	75.8	68.2
28	...	...	71.1	80.0	74.2
29	...	...	76.3	83.1	81.2
30	...	...	79.8	85.5	83.4
N	662	757	733	1,290	868

Source: 1990 General Social Survey.

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## Glossary<sup>1</sup>

**Census year:** A neologism patterned after “fiscal year”. In Canada, it refers to the 12-month period between June 1 of one year to May 31 of the following year. It can equally designate the year during which a census is held.

**Cohort:** A group of individuals or couples who experience the same event during a specified period. For example, there are birth cohorts and marriage cohorts.

**Cohort, fictitious:** An artificial cohort created from portions of actual cohorts present at different successive ages in the same year.

**Crude rate:** Relates certain events to the size of the entire population. For example, the crude birth rate for Canada is the ratio of the number of births in Canada in a year to the size of the Canadian population at mid-year. Crude death rates and crude divorce rates are calculated in the same way.

**Current index:** An index constructed from measurements of demographic phenomena and based on the events reflecting those phenomena during a given period, usually a year. For example, life expectancy in 1981 is a current index in the sense that it indicates the average number of years a person would live if he or she experienced 1981 conditions throughout his or her life.

**Dependency ratio:** A ratio that denotes the dependency on the working population of some or all of the non-working population.

**Depopulation:** The decline in the population of an area through an excess of deaths over births (not to be confused with the depletion of an area through emigration).

**Endogamy:** Marriage within a specific group.

**Endogenous:** Influences from inside the system.

**Excess mortality:** In differential mortality, the excess of one group's mortality rate over another's (see Sex ratio).

**Exogamy:** Marriage outside of a specific group.

**Exogenous:** Influences from outside the system.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information consult the following: International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, *Multilingual Demographic Dictionary*, Ordina Editions, Liège, 1980; van de Walle, Étienne. *The Dictionary of Demography*, ed. Christopher Wilson. Oxford, England: New York, NY, USA.

**Fertility:** Relates the number of live births to the number of women, couples or, very rarely, men.

**Fertility, completed:** The cumulative fertility of a cohort when all its members have reached the end of their reproductive period.

**Fertility, cumulative:** Total live births from the beginning of the childbearing period until a later date.

**Frequency:** Frequency of occurrence within a cohort of the events characterizing a particular phenomenon.

**Frequency, cumulative:** Total frequency from the start of the period of exposure to risk of event up to a later date.

**Infant mortality:** Mortality of children less than a year old.

**Intercensal:** The period between two censuses.

**Life expectancy:** A statistical measure derived from the life table that indicates the average years of life remaining for a person at a specified age, if the current age-specific mortality rates prevail for the remainder of that person's life.

**Life table:** A detailed description of the mortality of a population giving the probability of dying and various other statistics at each age.

**Migration:** Geographic mobility between one locale and another.

**Natural increase:** A change in population size over a given period as a result of the difference between the numbers of births and deaths.

**Neonatal mortality:** Mortality in the first month after birth (part of infant mortality).

**Net migration:** Difference between immigration and emigration for a given area and period of time.

**Nulliparous:** Pertaining to a woman or a marriage of zero parity (has not produced a child).

**Parity:** A term used in reference to a woman or a marriage to denote the number of births or deliveries by the woman or in the marriage. A two-parity woman is a woman who has given birth to a second-order child.

**Population growth:** A change, either positive or negative, in population size over a given period.

**Population movement:** Gradual change in population status over a given period attributable to the demographic events that occur during the period. Movement here is not a synonym for migration.

**Post-neonatal mortality:** Mortality between the ages of one month and one year.

**Prevalence:** Number of persons with a certain characteristic in a given group of persons.





- Are we experiencing a "marriage crisis" or a simple change in life styles...?
- Following a short period of young and almost universal marriage, Canadians are again marrying later, but for different reasons.
- The average length of marriage is shrinking more than the amount of time we spend married.
- Through good and bad times alike, most Canadians get married ... and this applies today.
- The most widely used marriage indicators are greatly underestimating current levels of marriage.
- Divorce and separation are altering the kinship landscape ... maternal heritage is becoming dominant.
- A Saturday wedding in June? Major shifts in our timing.
- The older the groom, the younger the bride ... relatively of course.
- Living together before marriage ... common law unions have become the rule.







